



# Origins of the Chinese Avant-Garde

The Modern Woodcut Movement

Xiaobing Tang

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The images used as openers are, for title page, Chen Baozhen, *Coolies* (fig. 54, shown reversed on black); for introduction, nude model with students at Shanghai Meizhuan, ca. 1930 (fig. 2); for chapter 1, Lin Fengmian, *Will to Life* (fig. 3); for chapter 2, Xu Xunlei, *The Outcry of the Soul* (fig. 6); for chapter 3, Wang Zhanfei, *Woodcut* (fig. 18); for chapter 4, Hu Yichuan, *To the Front* (fig. 30); for chapter 5, Pan Ye, *Spring Field* (fig. 63); and for conclusion, Li Hua, *Roar, China!* (plate 10). Full credit information can be found in the list of illustrations, pp. 289–92.

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For Katia and Kolia, my two little fellow travelers

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many of my friends found it surprising that I should embark on a study of art theories and movements in modern China, but the truth is that through this project I have returned to one of my earliest passions—drawing and painting. I still remember vividly the serious joy of doing one portrait of a playmate after another in the work-unit housing compound where I grew up; the long afternoons when I would bike all over town, hunting for some basic but elusive oil paints; and the noisy neighborhood market where my friends and I tried stealthily to sketch vegetable vendors and engrossed shoppers. Several of my childhood friends did end up going to art schools, and I for some reason became a student of modern Chinese literature and intellectual history. Over the years, however, the almost visceral appeal of a drawing in charcoal or of a textured oil painting has never stopped exciting me. In 1999, when it occurred to me that a woodblock print from the 1940s by Li Hua would work as a perfect visual statement for the book that I was then finishing, *Chinese Modern*, I had a sense of what my next book should be about. Given my training, I knew my research project would not turn me into an artist, but I did not foresee how the book was to open things up for me so dramatically.

Only after I finished the entire manuscript did I realize how much I still benefit from the series of lectures Fredric Jameson gave in Beijing in 1985. He introduced me to a fascinating way of looking at visual images, as well as to issues related to representing sounds. I am always grateful to Fred for having opened up a world of ideas and possibilities for me, and I hope he will find in this book a worthy tribute to his generosity.

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I hope my parents will enjoy this book, even though they may not be able to read it. The book is dedicated to my own children, Katia and Kolia, whose arrival in the world has brought me incomparable joy and who will continue to enrich my life. To their wonderful mother and my beautiful wife, Liza, I remain as thankful as when I first formally acknowledged her cheerful support and sage advice many years ago.





## Introduction

1

The avant-garde at the center of this book is the modern woodcut movement that emerged in Republican China in the early 1930s. In seeking inspiration from foreign sources and by forming an alliance with the left-wing cultural movement, the first generation of modern woodcut artists brought a radically new look and mission to a marginalized native medium. It was a generation that regarded itself as part of an international print-revival movement that swept across Europe, America, and East Asia in the early decades of the twentieth century. This generation of Chinese printmakers greatly extended the vocabulary, grammar, and versatility of the black-and-white woodblock print and promoted it as a superbly expressive and evocative common visual language of the modern age. These artists also succeeded, as no other contemporary art movements had, in transforming the existing institutions and practices of art, and in reorganizing the prevalent structures of visibility and visual representation.

What the young woodcut artists created, observed Lu Xun (1881–1936) in 1935, was a modern public art (*dazhong yishu*) that overcame the entrenched division between a lofty, eremitic “elegance” and a tasteless, crowd-pleasing “vulgarity.” In addressing the hitherto underrepresented masses as its vast viewing public, the woodcut movement helped not only to usher in fresh subject matter for visual arts, but also to give recognition to a new historical subject and agent. The Chinese woodblock print, as the American journalist Agnes Smedley (1892–1950) saw it in the 1940s, became a revolutionary “new art form for the 400 million.”<sup>1</sup> It heralded an artistic as well as a political modernity and would become etched deeply into the collective visual memory and consciousness. For all these reasons, I argue that the woodcut movement was the most consequential art movement in modern China; it was also an avant-garde movement in the fullest sense of the concept.

The avant-garde thrust of the nascent woodcut movement was firmly grasped by perceptive contemporary writers and commentators. In April 1934, for instance, the distinguished modern cartoonist, art critic, and educator Feng Zikai (1898–1975) praised the striking effect of the black-and-white woodblock print and regarded it as a harbinger of a synthesizing vi-

sual art.<sup>2</sup> What the increasingly integrated and accelerated modern life called for, in Feng's view, was a visual art both "evocative in effect" and "realistic in form," which to him meant a fusion of Eastern and Western aesthetic traditions. As an artist trained in Chinese painting but also systematically exposed to Western art during a sojourn in Japan, Feng had long felt the need to search for a synthesis between what appeared to be two completely divergent artistic sensibilities. In 1930 he had even argued eloquently that modern art in the West amounted to a capitulation to the aesthetic and essence of Chinese painting.<sup>3</sup> For Feng and many of his contemporaries, Chinese art was epitomized by ink-and-brush literati painting (*wenren hua*) on scrolls, with its characteristic use of empty space, summary renditions, and lines conveying shape, texture, and movement; Western art was best represented by the pre-impressionist oil painting on canvas, which was full and tight in composition, strove for a credible representation, and relied on masses of color to approximate actual objects. The scene portrayed on an oil canvas, Feng further elaborated, was therefore a complete one, whereas a hanging scroll, which made no pretense to verisimilitude, displayed a suggestive incompleteness and evoked the unfamiliar and the fantastic.

The coming together of realistic and evocative painting, Feng Zikai claimed in his essay "Painting of the Future," answered a social need. Echoing calls for a mass-oriented public literature, Feng advocated for similar aims in the visual arts. To reach the largest audience possible, he argued, painting had to be both evocative and intelligible—the fundamental features of Eastern and Western painting, respectively. "In theory as well as in practice, the strengths of these two types of painting [Eastern and Western] can be combined to create a world art for the new age." Feng saw evidence of this new world art in popular prints, posters, and even in commercial advertisements, which he knew served as a necessary means to extend capitalism. He took particular note of a selection of contemporary Chinese woodblock prints published in the literary journal *Modern Age* (also titled *Les contemporains*) in 1933: "After viewing a traditional Western painting, these prints give one the pleasure of taking a deep breath after holding one's breath for too long; turning to them after viewing a Chinese painting, one feels as if having suddenly awakened from a dream and landed on solid ground."

What Feng Zikai appreciated in the woodblock print was that characteristic of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction identified by Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) as its "exhibition value." The future painting, as Feng envisioned it, would contain the shock effect that Benjamin, writing in Germany in 1936, claimed was the only way to engage a distracted mass audience. For Benjamin, "reception in a state of distraction, which is increasingly noticeable in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise."<sup>4</sup> Feng, too, was responding to profound changes in apperception; like Benjamin, he was addressing a new need that art in the modern world had to satisfy. His endorsement of woodblock prints therefore directs our attention to aspects of the woodcut movement often overshadowed by the political symbolism with which the first generation of modern woodcut artists consciously charged their chosen medium.

Benjamin's statement that "one of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation

of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later"<sup>5</sup> raises some of the questions this book intends to answer: Under what conditions did the modern Chinese woodcut movement create such a demand? What was the nature of the demand? And how would it be satisfied, both technically and institutionally?

To answer these historical questions, I will begin by reconstructing the field of art that nurtured the woodcut movement—and from which the movement then sought to distinguish itself. To present a comprehensive picture of the complex and fast-evolving modern field of art before the devastating Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, I will discuss influential theories and discourses on art, follow institutional histories and developments, and study competing art societies and movements. In sorting through the multiple forces that converged at critical moments, I will be able to trace historical lineages and uncover connections.

One such critical moment was the year 1928, when development of fine arts became a state-sponsored project with the establishment of the Nanjing government in the wake of the historic Northern Expedition. The first three chapters of this book all start with the beginning days of 1928, with each chapter pursuing a separate set of issues and course of events. Together they weave a rich tapestry that brings forth some of the major figures of modern Chinese art and art discourse: Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), Lu Xun, Liu Haisu (1896–1994), Lin Fengmian (1900–1991), Guo Moruo (1892–1978), Tian Han (1898–1968), and Xu Beihong (1895–1953). These chapters also demonstrate that in the first decades of the twentieth century the term *yishu* (art) implied a much broader range of practices and a grander project than did *meishu* (fine arts). Creating a distinct and modern Chinese art was the ambitious goal of several generations of writers, artists, playwrights, filmmakers, translators, critics, educators, editors, and students, even though they may have harbored different visions of this new art.

One defining feature of the modern field of art that developed during the Republican era was a persistent discourse on the meaningfulness and consequentiality of art. In 1912, with the newly created Republican government barely in control of the country, its first education minister, Cai Yuanpei, put aesthetic education squarely forward as a state project. Even before this effort to establish fine arts as a necessary modern social institution, during the last years of the Qing dynasty reformist and modernization programs alike had promoted arts and crafts as an instrumental modern technology. The redoubled belief in a socially consequential art during the Republican era grew out of a deep uncertainty about the artist's sociocultural position, which had to be defined after the irrevocable implosion of the imperial order and continually reconfigured with the steady erosion of traditional aesthetic values. (The emergence of the modern field of art in Japan during the Meiji period, too, was accompanied by continual debate over the purpose of art and the role of the artist in a rapidly modernizing nation-state.<sup>6</sup>) When the Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts was founded toward the end of 1912, Liu Haisu, a key founder, issued a grandiose mission statement that applied a dignifying veneer over a new venture. Through public notices, he identified two noble objectives of the new-style art school: "To develop the native art of the East and to study the riches of Western art," and "to fulfill the responsibility of advocating for art in a



cruel and dull society, because we believe that art can reduce the suffering of the populace in present-day China; it can also awaken the common folk from their daydreaming.”<sup>7</sup> In the ensuing two decades, these twin goals would be invoked repeatedly by artists defending their vocation and relevance, and by art educators and theorists expounding the necessity of art in modern China. The art movement spearheaded by Lin Fengmian in the second half of the 1920s, in particular, would endorse such aspirations as expressing a liberal-humanist commitment to aesthetics and transcendent values. Participants in the subsequent woodcut movement, too, could not avoid addressing questions of purpose and function, but their answers would be critically different.

By April 1934, when Feng Zikai was contemplating a global art of the future, the art community he addressed was as restless as it was diverse and hopeful, especially in the city of Shanghai, where debris from the ruinous conflict between Chinese and Japanese troops in January 1932 was still visible in much of its northwestern districts. He must have felt reverberations from the modernist Storm Society, which had loudly declared its desire to create an abstract cosmopolitan art in October 1932 and had since held two well-publicized exhibitions. He may have come across an ephemeral journal with the French title *L'art*, which in January 1933 had opened a forum on “The Future of Art in China”—or another monthly, called *Fine Arts Magazine*, which in January 1934 had published a lead article by the veteran painter Huang Binhong (1864–1955) titled “On the Future of Chinese Art.”<sup>8</sup> In November 1934, Huang would play a central role in founding the journal *National Painting Monthly*, whose explicit purpose was “to demonstrate the essence of native art and to enhance its standing on the scene of international art.”<sup>9</sup> Feng might not have been aware, however, of the youthful Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society, which had organized two woodcut exhibitions in the neighboring city of Hangzhou in 1933, or the World Art Research Society in Beiping (as it was then called), which had been active since 1931. Most certainly, he would not have known about an exhibition titled *Painters and Printmakers from Revolutionary China* that had just taken place at the Galerie Billiet–Pierre Vorms in Paris in March 1934. Fifty-eight woodblock prints by little-known artists from Shanghai and Beiping were displayed in the exhibition, the first ever to showcase modern Chinese creative prints abroad. The individual who selected the prints to send to the French sponsor of the show was Lu Xun, spiritual patron of the woodcut movement.

We are now in a privileged position to see the relation between these multiple currents and to appreciate their impact on the course of a complex history. In the last two chapters of this book, I will delve into the networks of art groups, institutions, discourses, political agencies, interpersonal relations, and individual efforts that enabled the woodcut movement quickly to gather momentum and to redefine and then galvanize the national art scene in the mid-1930s. As a self-conscious avant-garde, the woodcut movement generated more than a distinct body of artwork: it promoted radically new conceptions of art, maintained a critical distance from the existing art field, introduced innovative exhibition practices, and created a mobile national network for a different experience of art.

On at least two critical issues, the Chinese woodcut movement had much in common with the historical avant-garde movements in early-twentieth-century Europe, such as Dadaism: it voiced a radical critique of art as an institution or social subsystem, and it aimed at reintegrating art into the praxis of life.<sup>10</sup> In rejecting the productive and distributive apparatus as well as the discourse of aesthetic autonomy in bourgeois society, the European avant-garde, as Peter Bürger observes, succeeded in revealing “the nexus between autonomy and the absence of any consequences” with regard to modern Western art.<sup>11</sup> What the Chinese avant-garde confronted, however, was not only a nascent modern system of artistic values and practices, but also an entrenched traditional aesthetic order and sensibility. Furthermore, the looming national crisis defined how the woodcut artists understood the praxis of life to which they wished to return art and on which they sought to exert an impact.

In July 1936, as the *Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition* opened in Guangzhou, a map of China (from which Manchuria and the far west were absent) appeared on the back cover of the accompanying journal *Field of Woodcut*. Displaying the rambling itinerary projected for the exhibition, the map illustrates the wide reach of the woodcut movement and bespeaks its national imaginary; however, it does not make obvious the historical embeddedness or origins of the movement. What I offer in this book is a retracing of the many tortuous paths that led to and converged on this national map, which may indeed be viewed as a visual manifesto of the aspirations of the modern woodcut movement in its first stage.

It would be erroneous, however, to suggest that the first generation of woodcut artists did not possess a keen sense of history. On the contrary, the young artists, predominantly male and students of Western art, waged the woodcut movement because their ardent wish was to make a meaningful historical intervention. A profound confidence permeated their manifestos, their artistic creations, their efforts to organize and coordinate national exhibitions, and their careful documenting of history as it unfolded. In preparing for the *Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition*, for example, the Modern Prints Society in Guangzhou compiled and published a detailed record chronicling its two-year existence. In 1940, a group of leading woodcut artists would offer “A Comprehensive Review of the Chinese Woodcut Movement in the Past Ten Years” to define the nature of the movement and to characterize the stages of its development.<sup>12</sup> By then, the Sino-Japanese War had finally broken out, driving the woodcut movement from urban centers into various remote parts of the country, where it entered a new phase. The brutal and prolonged war did not keep Tang Yingwei (1912–?), an accomplished artist and organizer, from composing the first detailed account of the movement, *History of Modern Chinese Woodcuts*, which he published in Fujian province in 1944.

In the following decades, as the sociopolitical conditions changed, the woodcut movement evolved into a formidable institution and cultural establishment in the People's Republic of China. No longer an avant-garde on the margins, the first generation of woodcut artists in the 1950s experienced a significant shift in their social role. The subject matter and visual style of their artwork, and the relationship of the woodcut to other art mediums, all

changed as the color prints that celebrated and projected a new, socialist era were endorsed as the desirable form and expression. Yet commitment to the woodcut as a public and populist art form persisted. Indeed, the broad adoption of a woodcut-based visual language during the mass movements of the 1960s may be considered a reassertion of the avant-garde aspirations of the woodcut movement in its oppositional pioneering stage. As contemporary artist Wang Guangyi (1957–) recently noted, images relying on the evocative visual effects of the woodblock print, whether celebratory or denunciatory, constitute an undeniable “socialist visual experience” in China. It is this visual memory and grammar that Wang, an oil painter, has come to engage and estrange through his political pop art.<sup>13</sup> The history of the modern Chinese woodcut in the second half of the twentieth century represents the complex afterlives of the avant-garde, and I hope to treat this topic comprehensively in a future study.

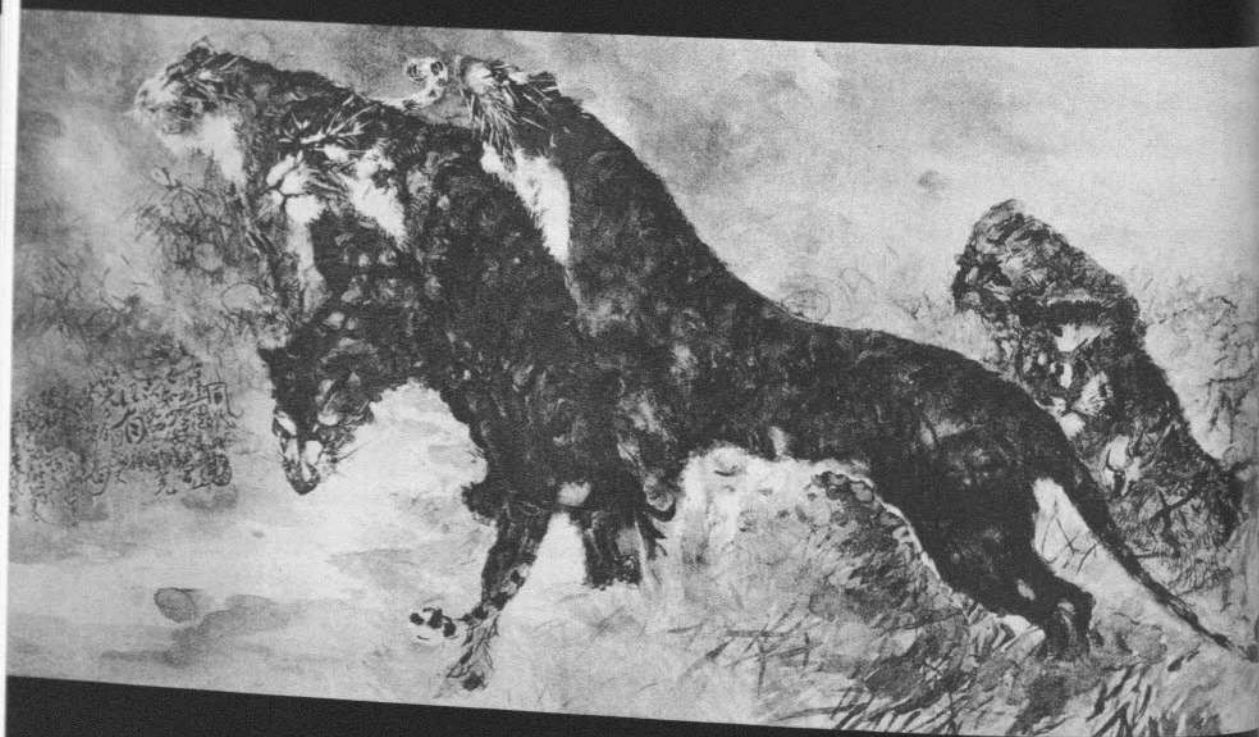
For the present volume, I have found very useful the numerous memoirs, essays, monographs, and anthologies that have been published in the past decades to record the beginning of the woodcut movement and recast it in a heroic light.<sup>14</sup> My extensive archival research has taken me far beyond the increasingly hagiographic latter-day representations and self-representations, however, and also beyond the woodcut movement as it is narrowly delineated. Among the most significant sources for my study have been the prints and documents collected by Lu Xun in the final years of his life, made widely available for the first time in a five-volume set in 1991. The abundance of publications in China on the woodcut movement only underscores the relative paucity of English-language scholarship on this subject, even though many art historians and critics writing in English, among them prominent scholars such as Michael Sullivan, Ellen Johnston Laing, Julia F. Andrews, and Kuiyi Shen, have certainly appreciated the importance of the movement.<sup>15</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the first and only monograph in English on the woodcut movement in its beginning stage is a doctoral dissertation finished at Stanford University in the mid-1970s and published in condensed form in 1979.<sup>16</sup> This current study should provide a timely update and also expand the scope of investigation.

While placing the woodcut movement in its multiple contexts and against the looming Sino-Japanese War, I do not want to lose sight of its artistic achievements. It is my goal to present a formal analysis and appreciation that some of the early woodblock prints clearly deserve but seldom receive. Often I will point to the many stylistic and conceptual influences that inspired those works, for it is abundantly clear that the woodcut movement in China was an integral part of the agitated international artistic and cultural scene at the time, and it drew on many sources of influence and inspiration, ranging from German expressionism, to the contemporary Belgian printmaker Frans Masereel, to wood engravings from the Soviet Union, and to the modern Japanese creative print (*sōsaku-hanga*).

In the conclusion to this book, I will reflect on an enduring theme of modern Chinese woodcuts: the individual or collective issuing a defiant outcry. The effort to render the voice as a visual image originated in the dual imperatives of expression and representation that

were fundamental to the woodcut movement as an artistic and social avant-garde. In seeking to generate an aural impact from the visual image, the woodcut artists proclaimed their belief in the empowering potential of their art. As I will demonstrate through a close reading of the haunting 1935 print *Roar, China!* by Li Hua (1907–1994), the urge to visualize the human voice grew out of a deeply bestirring modern age, in which national awakening and international solidarity were vital to an emancipatory artistic imagination.





# 1

## The Beautiful Object of Art

9

In addition to the usual good wishes appropriate to the occasion, the arrival of the year 1928 seemed to inspire a general hopefulness in Republican China, especially in the vast fertile region along and south of the Yangtze River. On New Year's Day, the Nationalist government was inaugurated with due fanfare in the newly established capital, Nanjing, some sixteen years after the founding of the Republic and almost three years after the death of its creator, Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925). The Northern Expedition, a fierce military campaign originating in Guangdong (Canton) in the summer of 1926, had brought a nominal unity to southern China in April 1927 and would push on, but the new year still excited great anticipation for the beginning of what would be called the Nanjing decade (1927–37) of the Nationalist government.

The prospect of stability was heartening to a country that had suffered much disorder, humiliation, and devastation. Even the usually apolitical romance writer Zhou Shoujuan (1894–1968) felt the pull of the moment and contributed a brief allegory to the “New Year's Extra” of *Shun Pao*, the oldest and most prestigious daily paper in Shanghai. In this ingenious piece about the young Republic, “He Is Now Seventeen,” Zhou lamented that the malnourished youth, grievously neglected after a difficult birth, had the pitiful look of an invalid. Poorly educated, with a runny nose and tattered clothes, he had been taunted and once mercilessly whipped twenty-one times by his eastern neighbor. When the boy was sixteen, however, “a wise and capable young man” from the family (an allusion to the would-be generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek [1887–1975]) challenged the corrupt elders and rid the boy of his illness. The intense treatment appeared to have some effect, but was interrupted by a dangerous “scarlet fever.” The allegorist prescribed more rest and better nutrition, and ended with the hope that the youth would head toward a bright future.<sup>1</sup> Yet the “scarlet fever” seemed to be no passing affair. The “City News” section of the same day's *Shun Pao*, for instance, publicized a special extensive curfew, imposed by the Nationalist army and the local police in anticipation of New Year's Day riots that the Communists were rumored to be instigating.

Also among the dozen articles in the *Shun Pao* "New Year's Extra" was an essay by the poet-sculptor Li Jinfa (1900–1976), who in the summer of 1925 had returned to Shanghai from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The only Chinese artist with beaux-arts training in sculpture at the time, Li Jinfa had arrived, as was reported by *Shun Pao*, to take a teaching position at the renowned Shanghai Fine Arts College. He soon realized that students had no interest in a still-strange art form, however, and in the following year and a half he found no steady employment, although his reputation as an enigmatic symbolist poet grew rapidly. He also developed a friendship with Cai Yuanpei, an active ranking member of the Nationalist party in charge of educational affairs. They had first met a few years before in Europe, and their friendship eventually helped Li land a secretarial job with the newly created University Council in August 1927.<sup>2</sup> The University Council, proposed and headed by Cai Yuanpei, was part of the sweeping makeover implemented by the Nanjing government in the second half of 1927 and had as its mission the reorganization of the Ministry of Education.

Li Jinfa's *Shun Pao* essay, "On the Current Condition and Future of Art Education in Our Country," was certainly more academic in style and purpose than Zhou Shoujuan's sentimental allegory. In it, Li complained that art education in China lagged sorely behind that of other nations, although considerable attention was paid to technological training. There were no credible fine arts colleges in the nation, the public showed no capacity for aesthetic appreciation, and as a result savagery and moral disintegration were rampant. Li pleaded with the newly formed University Council to provide adequate material support for institutions of fine arts, and to promote education of the public in art: "Let there be theaters for them to go to, public parks for them to walk in, museums for them to visit, and exhibitions every year for them to study. . . . If this effort continues for ten years, impressive results will follow."<sup>3</sup>

That the "New Year's Extra" included a discussion of art education indicated a growing public interest in the topic, fostered over the preceding decade by continual advocacy on the part of the educated and cosmopolitan elite, with Cai Yuanpei as its most prominent spokesman. Li Jinfa's essay also sent a clear and public signal that the creation of a national art academy was on the agenda of the University Council, and that the field of art in modern China was to enter a new phase of institutional development.

### FOR AN AESTHETIC EDUCATION

The Commission on Art Education within the University Council held its first meeting on November 27, 1927, at Li Jinfa's residence on Rue Massenet of the French Concession in Shanghai. Li was one of the commission's ten members, along with the French-trained oil painter Lin Fengmian; the American-trained architect Lü Yanzhi (1894–1929), who later designed the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing; and the Japanese- and German-educated

composer Xiao Youmei (1884–1940). As chancellor of the University Council, Cai Yuanpei presided at the meeting. Only the day before, in another part of the French Concession, he had inaugurated the first National Music Conservatory, with Xiao Youmei as its founding dean. At this first meeting, the commission adopted its own charter and discussed two central projects: a national fine arts exhibition in 1928 and a national art academy. The day following the meeting, *Shun Pao* published a detailed report on the new commission, noting that Chancellor Cai Yuanpei "has always paid special attention to institutional developments in the field of art."<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, even though in the second half of 1927 Cai was involved in intense maneuverings to help the new Nanjing government establish itself, he wasted no time in assembling the Commission on Art Education. Having been frustrated by the political paralysis and the perpetual chaos caused by regional warlords since the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, he now hoped that a Nationalist central government would help realize his long-cherished visions. He had always wanted to develop a general "aesthetic education" (*meiyu*) to foster cultural cohesion as well as social harmony in modern China. Since January 1912, when Sun Yat-sen appointed him minister of education in the first provisional cabinet of the Republic of China, Cai had sought to integrate aesthetic education into a modern school curriculum and educational system that would reflect the values and ideals of the nascent Republic.

Cai's idea of an aesthetic education can be traced to the modern German philosophical tradition, specifically to his education at the University of Leipzig, where he enrolled in 1908. Aged forty-two when he began his studies there, Cai was by no means a conventional student. A member of the Hanlin Imperial Academy since 1892, he had devoted himself to the reformist cause in the late 1890s by promoting new-style teaching at various schools. In 1902, he had formed the Chinese Educational Association with several like-minded educationalists and served as its first president. Later that year, he and his colleagues had founded the Patriotic Girls School in Shanghai to put into practice their pedagogical program, part of which was to advocate the creation of a republic. Increasingly an anti-Manchu activist, Cai had joined the Revolutionary Alliance in 1905, but had continued to teach and compile textbooks. In 1907, he had finally raised enough money to travel to Germany via Siberia. He became a dedicated student in Leipzig, where he remained until 1911, taking a wide range of courses on philosophy, psychology, ethics, aesthetics, and literature. He was particularly drawn to the psychology lectures of Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) and learned a great deal from Johannes Volkelt (1848–1930), a neo-Kantian philosopher, about Kant and aesthetics.<sup>5</sup> When news of the Wuchang Uprising reached him in October 1911, Cai Yuanpei was overjoyed, and within a month he had packed up and returned to China to serve as minister of education.<sup>6</sup>

Among Cai Yuanpei's first writings as minister of education, "Suggestions for a New Education" of February 1912 offered the most systematic explanation of his reform program. Here he observed that education should consist of two parts: one serving politics, the other going beyond it. The part answering concrete sociopolitical needs would include "national



military education, practical education, and education in civic virtues," while the part securing spiritual contentment for the individual would comprise "education in worldview and aesthetic education."<sup>7</sup> He found it necessary to elaborate on the benefits of the latter. Quoting Kant, he defined aesthetic experience as "a term designating both the beautiful and the sublime," a "bridge between the phenomenal and the noumenal world." Aesthetic education would allow an individual to cultivate a disinterested, elevated relationship with the phenomenal world and to aspire to "the idea of the noumenal world."<sup>8</sup> It would thus provide an effective means to an education in "worldview," which he equated with philosophy and transcendental truth. For Cai, aesthetic education ranked second in importance only to practical education.

This conceptual framework underlay Cai Yuanpei's blueprint for a modern educational system. He created a department of social education in his ministry, its status equal to that of the departments for general and specialized education. The new department would oversee the modernization of traditional customs and the development of new cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, art galleries, theaters, concert halls, even botanical and zoological gardens. At the first national conference on education he convened in July 1912, Cai Yuanpei presented over twenty reform proposals, emphasizing that moral virtues, cultivated through "worldview and aesthetic education," would distinguish the educational system of the Republican era from that of the despotic past.<sup>9</sup> Although he departed from his post in mid-July in protest over what he felt was the gross violation of constitutional principles by Provisional President Yuan Shikai (1859–1916), Cai left an indelible imprint on the educational policy that the Ministry of Education would subsequently endorse. As Cai was preparing to sail to Germany for a second time in September 1912, the Ministry of Education issued an edict on educational objectives: "Moral education is to be emphasized, supplemented with practical education and national military education, and further perfected with aesthetic education."<sup>10</sup> The idea of aesthetic education was thus officially adopted and entered the general discourse on educational reforms.

One of the few staff members of the newly created department of social education was Lu Xun (then known as Zhou Shuren), whom Cai Yuanpei had invited to take up a post in the Ministry of Education in February 1912.<sup>11</sup> One of the thousands of Chinese students who went to Japan in pursuit of useful modern knowledge at the turn of the twentieth century, Lu Xun had returned to China in 1909 after a seven-year stay and had settled in his hometown, Shaoxing, where he taught science at the local middle school. For over a year, he had spent much of his spare time reading and copying ancient literary and taxonomic texts. Cai Yuanpei's invitation promised a welcome change and brought Lu Xun closer to the cultural and political center of Republican China. When the provisional government moved to Beijing in March 1912, Lu Xun followed and was assigned to the department of social education because of his interest in art. There, deeply sympathetic to Cai's vision of aesthetic education, he took part in several projects, including observing performances of new-style drama and inspecting potential sites for public parks and museums.<sup>12</sup> Lu Xun's main

task, however, was to give introductory lectures on art at a summer seminar organized by the ministry. He also played a leading role in the bureau of fine arts research, an administrative unit formed within the ministry in the fall of 1912 specifically to prepare for an art gallery and a history museum.<sup>13</sup>

In early 1913, Lu Xun put together a concise and comprehensive document titled "Draft Proposal on the Dissemination of Art," which was published in a Ministry of Education communiqué. In defining some of the key terms used in the proposal, Lu Xun pointed out that the Chinese-character compound *meishu*, meaning "art" or "fine arts," was a neologism based on Western languages, but he stopped short of acknowledging that the characters for both *meishu* and *yishu* were kanji expressions in modern Japanese, used to translate "fine arts" and "Kunst" (as *bijutsu* and *geijutsu*, respectively).<sup>14</sup> By using the term *meishu* over *yishu*, Lu Xun may have intended to bring his discussion closer to the goal of aesthetic education (*meiyu*) endorsed by Cai Yuanpei. Although *meishu* and *yishu* were interchangeable in contemporary usage, they soon acquired distinct meanings: *meishu* would refer to more concrete fine arts, and *yishu* to a more metaphysical concept. Lu Xun's proposal elaborated a broad notion of creative art that would be understood as *yishu* a few years later.

Asserting that art was more than pleasing beauty, Lu Xun described it as the outcome of a creative process by which artists refined nature. Art was therefore superior to handicraft, furniture, precious objects, or exaggerated visual spectacles. True art had nothing to do with practical applications, and the public insistence on the usefulness of art amounted to a misconception—although art *could* represent a given culture, encourage moral rectitude, and assist economic development. Lu Xun's description of the elevating effect of art on future society, in which "only pure and lofty sentiments remain, and no evil or obscene desires will rise," resonated with Cai Yuanpei's notion of aesthetic education. The focus of his essay, however, was on the practical aspect of making art available to society, because, he argued, art realized its meaning and potential only when appreciated by the public. Lu Xun recommended that different levels of the government build museums and art galleries so art could be shared and circulated beyond private collections. He also called for concert halls and theaters for modern drama, but stated that the public exhibition of artwork by past masters as well as contemporary artists was the highest priority.<sup>15</sup>

Lu Xun's proposal outlined, for the first time, a government project to make artistic creations part of a modern public culture and social institution. Yet in the midst of the political chaos that consumed the early years of the Republic, his suggestions had little impact and aesthetic education remained an abstract idea. Not until 1917, when Cai Yuanpei returned to China to become president of National Peking University, did the project of aesthetic education gain renewed momentum and cultural significance. In April of that year, Cai delivered a speech titled "Aesthetic Education as a Substitute for Religion" to more than a thousand listeners at the Shenzhou Scholarly Society in Beijing. The speech was subsequently published in the August 1917 issue of the increasingly influential intellectual journal *New Youth*, where it galvanized much public attention.



Partly to clarify his ideas about aesthetic education and partly to counteract a culturally conservative effort that had gathered force in the second half of 1916 to institutionalize Confucianism as a state religion,<sup>16</sup> Cai Yuanpei argued in his speech that religion was bound to decline in modern times and be replaced by science, ethics, and aesthetics. He based his grand thesis on a humanist celebration of the European Renaissance. In a primitive society, he reasoned, religion dominated human spiritual life and served as knowledge, morality, and aesthetics all at once. With the scientific discoveries and social reorganization of the modern age, religion as knowledge and moral code proved to be inadequate and gave way to independent inquiries and disciplines. In Europe, "after the Renaissance, various fine arts gradually moved away from religion and toward humanism," and aesthetic experience served to cultivate sensibilities. "Pure aesthetic education is what molds and nourishes our emotion, endows us with noble and virtuous habits, and gradually purges us of selfish desires and notions about the difference between ourselves and others."<sup>17</sup>

Regarding visual arts as exemplary of such a purifying aesthetic experience, Cai Yuanpei would take every opportunity to encourage their systematic development and modernization. In April 1918, due to his continual support, the first National Fine Arts College was founded in Beijing, and Cai delivered a congratulatory speech at its opening. In the same month, he wrote a statement to outline the principles and pursuits of the Painting Method Research Society, one of several faculty-student extracurricular clubs that he had sponsored at Peking University.<sup>18</sup> The painting society attracted prominent artists such as Chen Hengke (1876–1923), Li Yishi (1886–1942), and the young Xu Beihong. During the next year and a half, Cai Yuanpei would personally oversee the activity of the society and address its members periodically. On one occasion, he commented on the different philosophies underlying Chinese and Western painting and contemplated why Chinese painters began by copying past masters whereas Western artists trained by observing nature. He urged the students to adopt a scientific approach and to practice Western-style studio drawing and plein-air landscape sketches.<sup>19</sup> After Xu Beihong left for Paris on a government scholarship in spring 1919, Cai invited Wu Fading (1888–1924), a talented oil painter who had recently returned from France, to take his place, introducing him to the painting society in the fall semester. On this particular occasion, Cai encouraged a creative exchange between Chinese and Western painting methods, while expressing his appreciation of pictorial representationalism in the tradition of the European Renaissance.<sup>20</sup>

Cai Yuanpei's idea of a synthetic new painting bespoke a growing consensus on the future of Chinese art among scholars and practicing artists. It resonated, for instance, with the impassioned call for a new era in Chinese painting issued by Kang Youwei (1858–1927), who as an arch reformist-cum-loyalist to the fallen Qing court had little else in common with the liberal and visionary president of Peking University. In 1917, as he lamented a short-lived attempt to reinstate the last Qing emperor, Kang Youwei catalogued his private art collection and composed a treatise on Chinese painting in the form of a lengthy preface. He began his essay by deploring the "utter demise" of Chinese painting in the past centuries and

placed the blame on misguided doctrines, specifically denouncing the elitist exaltations of literati painting that valorized unbridled subjective expression at the expense of verisimilitude. The rise of literati painting also meant a glorification of dilettantism that went hand-in-hand with a disdain for professional artists as mere artisans. To overcome this convention of self-indulgence, Kang proposed a thorough conceptual overhaul: the emphasis should now switch back from impressionistic renderings to verisimilitude, and the genre to develop was precision painting, even the so-called boundary painting (*jiehua*), which relied on straight lines created with a ruler rather than idiosyncratic ink or brush strokes. "If we continue to adhere to past practices, Chinese painting will be extinct as a result. Would there not be brilliant heroes in our nation to rise to the occasion and usher in a new age by bringing together Chinese and Western painting? Would it happen today? So I pray!"<sup>21</sup>

Kang Youwei's case against literati painting was based on two premises: first, that pictorial representationalism was a native artistic tradition that had been slighted and then eventually abandoned; and second, that the scientific precision enabled by realistic representation was responsible for the technological and military advancements in modern Europe and Japan. Renewing Chinese painting therefore involved both restoring a lost tradition and incorporating Western techniques. His proposed reform of Chinese painting was ultimately justified in terms of the practical applicability of graphic arts: "If painting is not improved," Kang reasoned, "there will be no industry or business to speak of." For him, the practice of *hua* covered artistic *painting* as well as technical *drawing*.

The argument for a useful form of painting or drawing, as opposed to "impractical" literati painting, had surfaced in the final decades of the Qing dynasty, when a general reformist discourse espoused practical statesmanship and demanded institutional adjustments. A central component of various reform programs during this period was the promotion of new industries and graphic technologies, which often included modern arts and crafts (generally referred to as *gongyi*), such as lithography, ceramics, etching, and photography. (The influential *Chinese Scientific Magazine*, created by the Englishman John Fryer [1839–1928] in 1876, carried accessible articles on all these crafts, as well as an "Introduction to Western Painting," serialized in 1880.) By the turn of the twentieth century, a steady campaign for developing the new and utilitarian "arts and crafts" had not only spawned many business ventures but had also led to courses on drawing and handicraft being widely adopted in the new-style school curricula. In 1906, for instance, two teachers' colleges in the north and south each opened a painting and handicraft department, where the pedagogical emphasis fell squarely on training students in representational and technical drawing.<sup>22</sup>

This campaign for new arts and crafts, observes art historian Zheng Gong, ushered in the modernization of Chinese visual arts and historically preceded all other fine arts movements in China.<sup>23</sup> The transitional role played by Li Shutong (1880–1942) is particularly emblematic in this context. After studying oil painting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, he returned to China and started teaching drawing and music at the Zhejiang Two-tier Teachers' College in 1912. There, the multitalented educator introduced his arts and crafts students to the

novel practice of nude drawing and outdoor sketching. His students therefore developed, as a contemporary inspector noted, a much stronger interest in fine arts than in crafts.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, the practical implications of arts and crafts continued to have their appeal. The curriculum at the National Fine Arts College of Beijing, approved by the Ministry of Education in July 1918 as a generally applicable model, still included Chinese painting, Western painting, and two sections of graphic design as its four basic components. (A set of courses on printmaking was listed under Graphic Design I: lithography, etching, woodblock printing, and multicolor printing.<sup>25</sup>)

Consciously or not, Kang Youwei was the last spokesman of the campaign for developing applied arts and crafts. Given his profile as a staunch monarchist in the new Republic, Kang's rejection of literati painting as well as his endorsement of a representational visual language generated few sympathetic responses at the time. In addition, his political stance seemed to keep him from becoming aware that young artists from his native Guangdong had already begun their search for a "new national painting."

In 1908, after several years of formal training in Meiji Japan (1867–1912) and deeply inspired by the syncretic Nihonga paintings that he witnessed there, Gao Jianfu (1879–1951), "the earliest visionary of artistic reform," returned to Guangzhou and set himself the goal of creating a modern Chinese painting.<sup>26</sup> He also brought back, after witnessing the Bunten (the periodic fine arts exhibition organized by the Japanese Ministry of Education), the novel practice of publicly displaying artwork.<sup>27</sup> Together with his brother Gao Qifeng (1889–1933) and Chen Shuren (1883–1948), both talented artists with training in Japan, Gao Jianfu founded the modern Lingnan School. What the "young Cantonese artist-revolutionaries" achieved, observes Ralph Croizier, was a creative combination of "Western realism, as translated by Japanese artists into ink painting," with "a strong emotional expressionism that can be called romanticism" (plate 1).<sup>28</sup>

In June 1912, after the founding of the Republic, the Gao brothers launched an illustrated magazine named *The True Record* in Shanghai (fig. 1). The primary purposes of the publication, issued three times a month, were to provide a political forum and to disseminate new knowledge, but it also devoted many pages to promoting the brothers' vision of a new Chinese painting. Most of the contributions to *The True Record* on the topic of renewing Chinese painting came from Chen Shuren. A graduate of the Kyoto Municipal School of Fine Arts and Crafts, Chen compiled a pamphlet from Japanese sources for serialization in the first sixteen issues of the journal. Titled *The New Painting Method*, the pamphlet was a comprehensive textbook on art history, art theories, and basic techniques of composition and color coordination. Its intended reader, stated the author, was the dilettante, for whom painting was a diversion rather than a profession. In the seventh chapter, "The Future of Painting," Chen attributed the lack of precision in Eastern painting to a misplaced confidence in artistic imagination and argued that studying nature was far superior to modeling a past master. The only way to keep Eastern painting viable in the modern age, he wrote, was to ground it in the Western method, such as employing the wider range of color choices utilized in wa-



1 Cover of *The True Record*, January 1913, with painting by Gao Qifeng.

tercolor and oil painting.<sup>29</sup> Training in Western realistic techniques, Chen asserted, ultimately entailed an "education of the eye."<sup>30</sup>

Thus despite their very different backgrounds and perspectives, Cai Yuanpei, Kang Youwei, and Gao Jianfu and his comrades all agreed on the need to update Chinese painting with Western techniques. Yet the most astonishing turn of events, for Kang Youwei at least, would be to see his ideas about reforming Chinese painting endorsed by the rising New Culture Movement. Shortly after Kang deplored the bankruptcy of the literati tradition in Chinese painting, Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), chief editor of *New Youth*, called for a "revolution in fine arts," repeating nearly all of Kang's observations, despite the fact that he would summarily dismiss Kang as a political and cultural reactionary. Like Kang, Chen Duxiu rejected the literati tradition in painting and affirmed the principle of verisimilitude. However, his agenda of legitimating a realist literature and art with the aim of contributing to the success of the New Culture Movement went far beyond the horizon of Kang's expectations.

The New Culture Movement, also known as the Chinese enlightenment, set out to advance progressive cultural values and practices in order to help transform China into a modern nation-state. A convenient date for marking the onset of the New Culture Movement is January 1917, when Chen Duxiu was appointed dean of humanities at Peking University by its new president, Cai Yuanpei; it is also the month in which *New Youth*, which Chen had started in Shanghai two years earlier, began publishing in Beijing. In the January 1917



issue of the journal, Chen Duxiu continued his critique of Confucianism and published an essay by Hu Shi (1891–1962), a student of philosophy, on literary reforms. The following issue opened with an article by Chen Duxiu advocating a “literary revolution.” The spate of failed political revolutions since the fall of the Qing dynasty, Chen stated, had been driven by “the ethics, morality, and culture, layered in darkness and mired in shameful filth, that have occupied the very core of our people’s spirit.”<sup>31</sup>

To cleanse such darkness and filth was a central commitment of the New Culture Movement. Lasting well into the mid-1920s, the movement marked an age when inherited cultural practices and institutions, from Confucianism to arranged marriage, from language to painting, from literature to historiography, from theater to medicine, were subjected to critical scrutiny because they were believed to be parochial and inadequate. It was also an age when many an advocate for social and cultural change saw in Western scientific rationality and democracy the ineluctable law, glory, and future of modernity.

The more specific goal of the literary revolution, as Chen Duxiu defined it, was to do away with formulaic literary Chinese as well as the archaic and pompous form of literature composed in it. Hu Shi’s initial call for stylistic and literary reforms had been founded on the effort to effect a simple and straightforward style, but Chen Duxiu eloquently cast these reforms as part of a broader, and necessary, cultural revolution. In contending that a realist, public-oriented, and socially conscious literature was indispensable to modernity, Chen also spelled out the political underpinnings of the New Culture Movement. In April 1918, a short story titled “The Diary of a Madman” appeared in *New Youth*. Its author was Lu Xun, a mature newcomer on the literary scene. Written in the form of a diary, in spoken Chinese, the story not only demonstrated what the literary revolution might yield, but also issued a resolute critique of traditional culture. Its publication quickly became a landmark event, the story unleashing a tremendous creativity in its author and bringing about a new literary sensibility. In denouncing the conformist Confucian society as incurably cannibalistic, the Madman created by Lu Xun struck an iconoclastic keynote and gave voice to the most profound aspirations of the age of New Culture.

The intellectual and institutional center of the New Culture Movement was Peking University, familiarly known as Beida, under the leadership of Cai Yuanpei. Since becoming its president in December 1916, Cai had steadfastly promoted intellectual open-mindedness and academic innovation. His reforms turned Beida into a truly modern institution of higher education. From instituting the horizontal, left-to-right printing format in university publications, to making available courses on Esperanto and other major languages, to breaking down boundaries between the natural sciences and the humanities, Cai was tireless in pursuing his vision of the university as a source of new ideas and talents, and of a new type of citizen. Not surprisingly, as William Duiker notes, his “provocative style . . . stimulated the rise of a new political and intellectual consciousness among the students at the university and at neighboring educational institutions.”<sup>32</sup> As one contemporary observer put it, Beida

under Cai Yuanpei’s stewardship was consolidated as “the grand base of intellectual revolution for the whole nation.”<sup>33</sup>

This general intellectual revolution would find its concrete expression in demonstrations led by Beida students in central Beijing on May 4, 1919. The student demonstrations arose out of patriotic outrage at the Beijing government’s readiness to yield to Japan the Shandong Peninsula, which had been under German control until the end of World War I. Quickly spreading to other urban centers in the nation, they marked the beginning of the May Fourth Movement, which would generate tremendous student interest in political activism and mobilization over the following years, and would further extend the reach and scope of the New Culture Movement.

As president of the university whose students played a leading role in the May Fourth Movement and its aftermath, Cai Yuanpei was deeply ambivalent. He was sympathetic to the students’ patriotic action and actively sought the release of those arrested by the police,<sup>34</sup> but at the same time he could not bring himself to regard the university as an institution not devoted to academic research and scholarship. Toward the end of 1919, concerned with continuing political agitation, Cai wrote to remind his contemporaries of the purifying function of aesthetic education. “Do not forget aesthetic education in a cultural movement,” he pleaded. Cautioning that cultural transformation required more than impulsive demands for emancipation or a new life, he reiterated the educational agenda of the New Culture Movement: “A culturally advanced nation should certainly implement science education, but more important, it should generalize art education.”<sup>35</sup> Schools of fine arts, music, crafts, and drama could provide specialized training, he wrote, but training in aesthetic sensibility had to reach society at large. Harking back to Lu Xun’s proposal of 1913, he suggested that modern venues for aesthetic education should be public art galleries and museums, art exhibitions, concerts, and theaters for opera or plays. In addition, artistic designs could beautify elements of everyday life: city streets, municipal parks, buildings, storefronts, and even advertisements.

Cai Yuanpei’s plea made clear his liberal-humanist vision of modern life and his valorization of order and normativity in a postrevolutionary culture and society. The public he addressed was unmistakably an urban bourgeoisie, and his aesthetic taste was self-consciously in the European Renaissance tradition. He would propose to decorate a prenatal nursery, for instance, with Grecian statues and images of wholesome naked men and women. His plea also underscored the radical potential of the New Culture Movement as intellectual enlightenment and political mobilization, the central ethos of which was change and renovation. While aesthetic education called for a new cultural practice and institution, its deepest aspiration was harmony and continuity, and it sought social improvement ultimately through individual refinement and cultivation. Cai would continue to rally artists and art educators with his idea of aesthetic education throughout the 1920s, but already, in 1919, he saw that the New Culture Movement might overwhelm his project by setting forth a revolutionary passion and politics.

## ECHOES OF A NEW CALLING

Cai Yuanpei's renewed plea for a socially ameliorative aesthetic culture at the height of the New Culture Movement would strike a responsive chord among a group of artists and art educators to the south, in the Shanghai region, where rapid growth in commerce, industry, population, and foreign concessions since the late nineteenth century had created a much greater practical need for competent artisans and craftsmen than in the politically paralyzed and culturally conservative Beijing. Shanghai in the early twentieth century already had all the prerequisites, as Ellen Johnston Laing describes it in her recent study of its vibrant visual culture, "for a flourishing international, modern commercial art center: a thriving commerce, a solid financial footing, a prosperous printing industry, and a population of artists eager to make a living."<sup>36</sup>

Commercial art as a viable profession, from illustrations in literary periodicals to newspaper graphics to popular calendar posters to backdrops for photography studios, also created a demand for formal schooling rather than traditional apprenticeship. The first prototypical art school in Shanghai may well have been the Tushanwan Painting House, originally named the Siccawei Arts and Crafts Center and operated by the Catholic Church since the 1860s. Here, a 1920 guidebook to the metropolis noted, "boys are taught drawing and tracing, and they copy pictures of ecclesiastical subjects for churches and schools and for private purchasers."<sup>37</sup> Religious images and icons, competently executed in large quantities, served as training for some of the earliest professional oil painters, and the Tushanwan Painting House has therefore been credited as "the cradle of oil painting in China."<sup>38</sup> In the first decade of the twentieth century, Chinese artist-entrepreneurs began setting up their own art schools, one of the first being the Learning Center for Backdrop Painting, established by the oil painter Zhou Xiang (1871–1933) around 1910. The school promised to train students to paint realistic backdrops for photography studios, but it folded a few months after its opening, as did eight other similar ventures in Shanghai during the same period.<sup>39</sup>

In January 1913, with hardly any training in Western painting, the seventeen-year-old artist Liu Haisu and several of his equally young friends launched the Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts, with course offerings in "various French paintings, other Western arts such as photography and electrotypes, as well as English classes."<sup>40</sup> Conceding that they might not be learned, this group of young men claimed nonetheless to have the sincerity and commitment to realize their lofty goals of developing Eastern art and studying Western art.<sup>41</sup> Not surprisingly, they were ridiculed for their lack of credentials in the school's early days. In August 1913, Zhou Xiang, now head of an oil painting school, publicly denounced Liu Haisu and his associates as unqualified students of his own and expelled them retroactively from his school. Warning that a bogus art school would only ruin the young and the impressionable, Zhou Xiang was probably equally worried about a potential competitor.<sup>42</sup>

Amid doubts and derisions, Liu Haisu forged ahead and outlasted and outshone many of his rivals, the hostile Zhou Xiang included. A skillful and intrepid entrepreneur, Liu brought



2 Nude model with students  
at the Shanghai Meizhuan, ca. 1930.

steady publicity to his program through press releases, journal publications, and regular exhibitions, and by hiring as teachers artists who had come to Shanghai after studying abroad. In 1914, for instance, Chen Baoyi (1893–1942) and Wang Yachen (1894–1983) both taught courses at the school. From then on, almost all the noteworthy artists active in Shanghai would be associated with Liu Haisu and his school in one way or another. Liu also proved to be an innovative administrator. As he would proudly state in 1922, "constant change" was the central theme of his school's history. By then, the name of the school had been changed to the Shanghai Fine Arts College (also called the *École de Peinture de Shanghai*, or the Shanghai Meizhuan for short) in preparation for its tenth anniversary. Readiness to change was the only way to keep the establishment current, Liu noted, since there were no precedents for running such an institution and, as a living organization, its task was to set a trend.<sup>43</sup>

From early on, Liu Haisu and his colleagues introduced into the school curriculum two innovative practices that would become a trademark of their institution: regular field trips for plein-air sketches and the use of nude models in the classroom (fig. 2). While a much-trumpeted field trip also served as an advertising procession, the use of nude models was a stormier affair. In March 1917, Liu Haisu successfully talked a male model into shedding his clothes and posing for a drawing class, almost two years to the day since the school first hired



a teenage boy as a clothed model. When student works were displayed in an academic-achievement exhibit later that summer, a visitor was appalled by what he saw and accused Liu of desecrating art. He stormed out of the showroom in angry protest and pleaded with a newspaper publisher the next day to print an official condemnation of such indecency. Thus began a public controversy over the use of nude models that would continue for nearly ten years, with Liu consistently defending the practice as an international norm and an affirmation of life and natural beauty. The protracted legal battle earned Liu Haisu much publicity, and he would emerge as an eloquent spokesman for modern art and art education.<sup>44</sup> By the time the affair came to an abrupt end in the mid-1920s, the Shanghai Meizhuan had earned a reputation for being the best-equipped art school in the metropolitan city, if not the entire country. In art historian Michael Sullivan's view, the Shanghai Meizhuan has every reason to be recognized as "the true birthplace of modern art in China."<sup>45</sup>

Behind Liu Haisu's growing prominence as an artist and art educator was Cai Yuanpei's unflagging support. In Cai's writings, Liu had found not only a theoretical defense of his educational enterprise, but also a far-reaching legitimation of his own vocation as an artist. Particularly encouraged by Cai's 1917 essay on substituting aesthetic education for religion, Liu had written to the renowned educator to introduce his fledgling art school. Cai Yuanpei had gladly responded and had become a mentor and patron of the rising artist.<sup>46</sup> In the spring of 1918, Cai put the Painting Method Research Society at Beida in contact with Liu and sent to Liu's school a hanging tablet engraved with his own calligraphy as a public endorsement. An awed disciple, Liu Haisu was also a tireless advocate for the cause of aesthetic education. After election to the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association later in 1918, he lobbied the association to extend its support for a fine arts research society, which it did. The greatest achievement of the research society—Liu would become its chairman in 1925—was the successful organization of the *First Jiangsu Provincial Fine Arts Exhibition* in March 1924, a major follow-up to the pioneering *Guangdong Provincial Fine Arts Exhibition* of December 1921. The 1924 exhibition, which included more than 1,300 items, was displayed for ten days in Shanghai.

In late 1918, the Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts started the journal *Fine Arts* to publicize both the school and basic concepts about Western painting. The second issue, published in July 1919, featured a photograph of Cai Yuanpei on the inside cover, with the caption "Promoter of Aesthetic Education in China." Liu Haisu would make several contributions to the journal, among them a brief essay on why aesthetic education was a fundamental way to save the nation.<sup>47</sup> Cai Yuanpei was deeply appreciative of Liu's dedication and agreed in late 1919 to head the school's new board of trustees, which, with other luminaries as members, was created to bring greater visibility and symbolic capital to the institution. In January 1922, when Liu Haisu had a solo exhibition in Beijing, Cai Yuanpei, sick and hospitalized, insisted on writing a long article to introduce the twenty-six-year-old artist to viewers in the capital. He described the artist as an energetic innovator in the field of art and his painting as inclining toward expressive postimpressionism (plate 2). "His art comes entirely

from observing nature, from truthfully depicting his emotional response to natural scenery, and from intimately expressing his individuality. This is why the lines, compositions, and colors of his paintings are filled with natural emotion."<sup>48</sup> (Liu Haisu had indeed been inspired by the postimpressionist paintings he had seen on a trip to Tokyo in the fall of 1919; his essay "Cézanne's Art" had appeared in the July 1921 issue of *Fine Arts*.) Following Liu's well-publicized Beijing exhibition, a rumor began to circulate that he would be asked to head the city's National Fine Arts College.<sup>49</sup>

The inaugural issue of *Fine Arts*, in November 1918, caught the attention of Lu Xun, who since publishing his "Diary of a Madman" in April of that year had assumed an active role in the New Culture Movement. In a review of the journal, published in the *Weekly Review* of Beijing, Lu Xun observed that "despite the occasional astonishing statements," *Fine Arts* testified to the enthusiasm and hard work of its editor and contributors.<sup>50</sup> Another reader of *Fine Arts* was Lü Cheng (1896–1989), a young aesthetician who had spent a year studying in Japan and had taught at Liu Haisu's art school from 1916 until 1918. Lü would convey a much more critical assessment of the journal in a letter to the editor published in *New Youth* at the beginning of 1919, taking the opportunity to call for "a revolution in fine arts."<sup>51</sup> Lu Xun's review, along with Lü Cheng's letter to *New Youth*, indicates the attention that Liu Haisu and his art school were receiving on the national scene.

Lü Cheng's letter in *New Youth*, accompanied by an endorsement of its sentiment by the chief editor, Chen Duxiu, began with a clarification of the distinction between the terms *yishu* (art) and *meishu* (fine arts). The fine arts in contemporary China, Lü declared, were in an intolerable state: whereas a traditional painter would have been either a member of the literati or an artisan and thus either excessively elegant or vulgar, new-style Western painting, taught at schools and promoted as part of aesthetic education, was often purely commercial, only concerned with satisfying the prurient interests of the crowd. As a result, he continued, the best new painting was thought to be images of beautiful women in calendar posters for advertisement purposes. He went on to express his disdain for the craftsmen in Shanghai who churned out such posters, but claimed that he was more offended by the fact that someone with no knowledge of fine arts could open an art school, publish a journal, and mislead young students.

Lü's outrage, presumably directed at Liu Haisu and his school, led him to demand a revolution in the field of art. Specific tasks aside, he argued that artists must study East and West, old and new, in order to encompass them all in their creations. As part of his plea, he sketched a two-pronged program for modernizing Chinese art: a systematic reorganization of the native heritage on the one hand and an introduction of new forms from the West on the other. As we have seen, this program had already been laid out in the mission statement of the Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts in 1913. The founders of the National Art Academy, too, would endorse it in 1928. Indeed, this balanced, cosmopolitan approach would often underlie broad cultural proposals and modernization projects in twentieth-century China. For Lü Cheng, this synthesizing operation would both ensure the responsibility and

respectability of modern art and clearly differentiate its noble creator from the self-interested dilettantish literati painter and the unimaginative, self-effacing artisan. With such a revolution in fine arts, promised Lü, "society will see the true path of fine arts, public perception will be updated, habits and taste will gradually change"—which meant that aesthetic education would have achieved its goal.

This grand reconstructive project seemed to excite Chen Duxiu far less than the immediate action of rejecting a moribund convention, however. Latching onto the notion of a "revolution in fine arts" and thanking Lü Cheng for putting it on the agenda of the New Culture Movement, Chen singled out representational realism, the allegedly classic mode of Western painting, as the method through which to start a revolutionary transformation of traditional Chinese painting. Like a writer, "an artist must also employ realism before he can give free rein to his talent and paint his own work without following the well-trodden paths." Realist representation, he argued, would have a liberating effect because it encourages the artist to study nature and human subjects rather than slavishly copying and imitating dead masters. Like Kang Youwei before him, Chen blamed the literati tradition for looking down upon court painting and for valorizing the artist's eremitic mind (*xieyi*) over an accurate rendition of the objective world (*xiaowu*). Only by reversing this hierarchy, he concluded, would there be room for introducing realism and reforming Chinese painting.<sup>52</sup>

Such an unreserved attack on traditional literati painting and an equally strong endorsement of a realist vision may not have been the response Lü Cheng had expected, for no further correspondence on the topic followed in the pages of *New Youth*. Both Lü Cheng's comprehensive proposal and Chen Duxiu's denunciation of literati painting were nonetheless paradigmatic, representing a critical assessment of the native artistic tradition during the New Culture Movement.

A more measured and technically informed critique of traditional painting came from the young painter Xu Beihong. His essay "On the Reform of Chinese Painting," based on a talk given at the Painting Method Research Society at Beida, was reprinted in the inaugural issue of *Study of Painting Magazine* in June 1920. By then, he was already in Paris attending the École des Beaux-Arts. Like Kang Youwei, Xu Beihong attributed the superiority of Western painting to its medium: paper, silk, and limited colors did not allow the Chinese artist to explore the full range of his skills or all the intricacies of nature, he asserted. Claiming that the highest aspiration of painting was the achievement of "utmost ingenuity and utmost verisimilitude" (*weimiao weixiao*), Xu equated ingenuity with artistic creativity and verisimilitude with craftsmanship. A painter could depict scenery accurately without being ingenious, he argued, but an ingenious artist was necessarily always accurate. While not rejecting literati painting altogether, Xu unambiguously advocated the development of realist techniques, in particular those that would enable an accurate depiction of the human figure.<sup>53</sup> By turning to technical details, he evidently sought to begin the reform of Chinese painting through elevating its status from a dilettantish hobby to a vocation as well as a discipline for rigorous study.

Against this critical trend, Chen Hengke would defend literati painting. A student of natural sciences in Japan until 1909, Chen had emerged by 1915 as a well-respected painter in Beijing, where he worked in the Ministry of Education and was a close friend of Lu Xun. In 1918, soon after becoming an advisor to the Painting Method Research Society at Beida, Chen was appointed professor of Chinese painting at the Beijing Fine Arts College, where he offered a course on the history of Chinese painting. When the art history professor Ōmura Seigai (1866–1927) of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts visited Beijing in 1921, Chen was inspired by the Japanese scholar's confidence in the necessary revival of literati painting. He subsequently translated Ōmura's writings and published an essay of his own, "On the Value of Literati Painting." Here Chen traced the history of literati painting to the flourishing Taoist practices in the Six Dynasties period (222–589) and identified dilettantism as its distinct feature and aesthetic value. He also regarded its departure from realistic representation as a major breakthrough in artistic conception, because it signified a surpassing of a lower stage of development. Moreover, he argued, "Western painting has always emphasized verisimilitude, but the new schools have broken all established rules and brought forth futurism and cubism. Would the uninitiated be audacious enough to find them laughable and outlandish?"<sup>54</sup> Chen Hengke's suggestion that modern Western art was similar to Chinese literati painting in its subjective aesthetics of defamiliarization would elicit many responses,<sup>55</sup> but he did not succeed in ending calls for representational realism in the visual arts. The debate over whether or how to strive for realism would soon be greatly complicated and politicized by the issue of what or whom to represent.

In the meantime, the New Culture Movement emanating from Beijing continued to inspire the nascent field of modern art and art education in Shanghai and neighboring cities. In late 1919, a group of more than thirty artists and art teachers in the region formed the Chinese Society for Aesthetic Education. Among its more prominent founders were music educator Wu Mengfei (1893–1979) and artists Jiang Danshu (1885–1962), Feng Zikai, and Zhou Xiang. The society subsequently created the Art Teachers' College and entered into competition with the Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts. In addition, it began publishing a monthly journal, *Aesthetic Education*, in April 1920 in an explicit effort to coordinate art education with the New Culture Movement. The stated agenda was to "reform the arid and dull schools and society, and to enable everyone to enjoy the pleasure of beauty."<sup>56</sup> The first issue of *Aesthetic Education* included articles on the purpose of aesthetic education (by Wu Mengfei), the nature of aesthetic consciousness (by Lü Cheng), and the teaching of music in secondary schools (by Zhou Lingsun). Such attention to both theory and practice would continue in the following issues of the journal. In the June 1920 issue, a lengthy essay by Zhou Lingsun, an art teacher at the Nanjing Superior Teachers' College, was titled "The New Culture Movement and Aesthetic Education." After elaborating on the connection between aesthetic education and family, society, politics, and business, Zhou made concrete proposals: he called for more fine arts colleges supported by the government, more awards for artists, the formation of art departments or associations, and public funding for private



art schools; he also suggested that "artists across the country should form their own groups and start a forceful fine arts movement."<sup>57</sup> The notion of a fine arts movement as an integral component of the new culture would have many reverberations throughout the 1920s.

The first issue of *Aesthetic Education* also included an essay by Ouyang Yuqian (1889–1962), titled "Democratic and Aristocratic Literature and Art." Echoing the enlightenment ethos of the May Fourth period, the noted dramatist set up a contrast between a modern democratic art and an aristocratic art, arguing that aristocratic art—nostalgic, static, and orderly—valorized typicality and rejected the mundane world, whereas democratic art was open, dynamic, and visionary, and excelled in "highlighting reality and expressing individuality." The theme of aristocratic art was despair, he claimed, and its effect was constraint, while the theme of democratic art was triumph and joy and its result was freedom.<sup>58</sup> The artist Yu Jifan similarly related art directly to modern political values in his essay "Democratic Art," in the July 1920 issue of *Aesthetic Education*. The purpose of democracy, according to Yu Jifan, was the extension of individuality, and the purpose of art was "setting free forms of life." A democratic art, therefore, was "a genuine art" because it fulfilled the true purposes of art. Citing Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Victor Hugo, Walt Whitman, Jean-François Millet, Auguste Rodin, and Henrik Ibsen as artists exemplifying the democratic spirit, Yu urged fellow artists to seek inspiration from the contemporary life of the people. He ended with a plea: "Let us hold hands, quickly march toward democratic art, and begin reforms in the realm of taste."<sup>59</sup>

*Aesthetic Education's* promotion of a democratic art with social consequences had much to do with the liberal political and intellectual climate of Taishō Japan (1912–26). Both Ouyang Yuqian and Yu Jifan had been educated in Tokyo and remained deeply interested in contemporary Japanese artistic and literary cultures. Liu Haisu was immediately drawn to the antiaristocratic and populist art movement there when he visited the country in the fall of 1919, after meeting the Japanese artist and printmaker Ishii Hakutei (1882–1958) in Shanghai earlier that year. Hakutei was on his way back from Europe in April when he met Liu and visited his school. Liu later recounted that Hakutei told him about the upcoming inaugural *Imperial Art Academy Exhibition* (Teiten) and a growing passion among Japanese artists, inspired by artistic developments in Soviet Russia, for a democratic "people's art" (*minzhong yishu*).<sup>60</sup> As a result of this conversation, Liu spent the month of September 1919 in Tokyo. Accompanied by Yu Jifan and others, he visited not only the first Teiten, but also half a dozen other art and handicraft exhibitions and an even larger number of fine arts educational institutions. Upon his return, he wrote up his observations and published them in a book called *Fresh Impressions of New Fine Arts in Japan* in 1921. He was particularly impressed by the nascent movement toward a socially engaged popular art that affirmed individual creativity and was most appreciative of the "innovation and freedom" that he felt permeating all the art schools he visited in Japan.<sup>61</sup>

Lü Cheng had in the meantime written a response to Yu Jifan's article on democratic art. Published in the September 1920 issue of *Aesthetic Education*, his essay "What Is People's Art?" asserted that all modern art was popular insofar as it took the general populace as its

audience, but that the art created specifically for the lower strata of society was needed at present to compensate for the insufficiencies of art created primarily for the upper classes. Lü Cheng noted that this form of "people's art" was inevitably didactic (with drama being the most common form), because it served as a means to educate the working and lower middle classes. He cautioned that "one must not believe that, because of the importance of people's art, there should be only this one form of art in the present or the future." Obviously worried that democratic art might become a plain political instrument, Lü Cheng defined as true art that which "not only takes the commoner as its audience, but engages all humanity."<sup>62</sup>

Subsequent issues of *Aesthetic Education*, which ceased publication in April 1922, did not take up the subject of democratic or people's art, but this initial mild-mannered exchange touched on some fundamental questions about aesthetic education. These questions concerned the function of art as well as the social position and identity of the artist in an emerging mass society. The exchange also showed that in addition to the discussion of reforms in Chinese painting, a reflection on the purpose and function of art was necessarily part of the modern discourse on art.

A scholarly essay by Tang Juan, published in 1921 in the mainstream journal *Eastern Miscellany*, helped place the idea of "people's art" into a much broader philosophical context. With direct references to Lü Cheng and to the recent exchange over democratic art, Tang described "art for art" and "art for life" as two opposing beliefs in modern society and explained their implications. According to Tang, the German philosophers Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Immanuel Kant were the first proponents of artistic autonomy and "purposefulness without purpose," whereas Plato and Johann Gottlieb Fichte related the beautiful to the good and aesthetics to practical value. The predominant tendency in the modern age, as reflected in the populist art theories of Leo Tolstoy, Peter Kropotkin, and William Morris, was "art for life," which Tang felt could compromise the idea of art. In Tang's view, "art for art" and "art for life" were not mutually exclusive but rather complementary approaches: a work of art seemingly disconnected with life may uphold an ideal, and "people's art" may not be inspirational if it confined itself to the present life. "We should know that an artist is an individual who studies art for the sake of nurturing life." An implicit adoration of the artist as clairvoyant led Tang Juan to defend "transcendent art," whose revelatory power was paradoxically reflected in the public's failure to appreciate it at the beginning. (His examples of art ahead of its time included futurism, cubism, and even naturalism, such as the "psychological naturalism" found in Rodin's sculpture.) Tang summarized his position using the metaphor of the living tree: "'Art for art' is the roots and trunk of 'art for life'; 'art for life' is the branches and leaves of 'art for life.' Roots, trunk, branches, and leaves are all part of a tree. Why bother splitting them into two halves?"<sup>63</sup>

Despite his argument that the opposition between "art for art" and "art for life" was a false problem, Tang Juan did not prevent future critics and writers from invoking these very doctrines. In the contemporary literary field, as we will see in the following chapter, "art for art"

and "art for life" would be embraced by competing groups in their debate over the merits of romantic expressionism versus realism and in their search for a prepackaged identifying slogan. The continued use of "art for art" and "art for life" as catchphrases throughout the 1920s and 1930s would signal an increasingly deliberate split between competing visions of the role of the modern artist or poet.

Alongside the growing interest in a socially useful and didactic "people's art," a group of educators made further efforts to integrate aesthetic education in the modern school system. In 1922, the philosopher Li Shicen (1890–1932) assumed the editorship of the respected *Chinese Educational Review* (established in 1909) and turned it into an organ for promoting aesthetic education. At the editor's invitation, Cai Yuanpei wrote a lead article to lay out a cradle-to-grave program for cultivating aesthetic sensibility.<sup>64</sup> The initiative by the *Educational Review* prepared the way for the newly formed, non-government-sponsored Chinese Association for Educational Reforms to endorse aesthetic education as part of its platform during its first annual convention in July 1922. Cai, as president of Beida, was one of the founders of the association and was elected as its first chairman. The mission of the organization was to promote modern education at the local level and to advise the government on policy issues. One motion, made by Cai Yuanpei, Liu Haisu, and others at the first convention, was that the association formally recommend a national fine arts exhibition as a government-sponsored event. The motion was adopted unanimously, but nothing came of it in the following years, which were plagued by political instability and military strife among warlords. (One idiosyncratic attempt was made by Zhou Qin hao, a Japanese-trained oil painter and founder of the Oriental Art Research Society in Shanghai, who in August 1924 tried to organize a national exhibition through the nominal All-China Federation of Artists.<sup>65</sup>)

While a national fine arts exhibition remained out of reach through much of the 1920s, fine arts education nonetheless underwent remarkable growth, thanks to collective as well as individual efforts. More than twenty art schools and colleges sprang up in various parts of the country, from inland cities such as Wuchang and Chengdu, to Xiamen (Amoy) in the south and Beijing in the north. One notable success was the Guangzhou Municipal School of Fine Arts, which came into being after the successful first *Guangdong Provincial Fine Arts Exhibition* of 1921. By 1926, the school was headed by the Japanese-trained oil painter Hu Gentian (1892–1985) and was entering a phase of steady development. Yet the region that supported the majority of new art schools was Shanghai and its neighboring cities.<sup>66</sup>

In April 1927, when art critic and editor of *Art Field Weekly* Zhu Yingpeng (1895–?) surveyed art schools in the city of Shanghai, he listed thirteen entities (apart from the two specializing in music and dance) that were either active or had been discontinued only recently, and estimated that the three or four major institutions together had more than one thousand students. In the same article, Zhu Yingpeng called for the creation of an art department in the proposed Sun Yat-sen University, which was on the agenda of the Nationalist government that had just settled in Nanjing. He admitted that he was not sorry that student unrest toward the end of 1926 had forced Liu Haisu temporarily to close down the

Shanghai Meizhuan; in fact, *Art Field Weekly* had given extensive sympathetic coverage to the school's students during the conflict.<sup>67</sup> While the Shanghai Meizhuan was clearly one of the best-recognized art schools in the late 1920s, Zhu continued, three other well-known schools—the New China Art College, the Shanghai Art College, and the China College of Art—had all been created in protest against the dominance of Liu Haisu, the "school lord."<sup>68</sup>

Many of the art schools of the 1920s were short-lived, due primarily to financial woes, lack of experience and institutional support, and fierce competition. The Main Current Fine Arts School, formed in 1924 by three Japanese-trained oil painters in a town outside Guangzhou, for instance, could scarcely survive on student tuition and folded a year after its opening.<sup>69</sup> Few of the privately funded schools were adequately equipped or staffed by qualified teachers. When the self-taught oil painter Yan Wenliang (1893–1988) launched his Suzhou Fine Arts School in September 1922, it was derided for not owning a single plaster cast and for the primitive teaching methods it employed. Deeply insulted, Yan Wenliang would acquire and ship home, after a two-year stay in France ending in 1930, a collection of more than 450 models in plaster of Paris. For a long time, no other art school could claim the same distinction.<sup>70</sup> Owing to dedicated efforts like this, fine arts education as a modern profession steadily gained legitimacy and recognition during this period. The recognition was further consolidated when the prolonged controversy over the use of nude models at the Shanghai Meizhuan concluded in 1926, with Liu Haisu winning a moral victory and the support of public opinion.<sup>71</sup>

The basic structure of modern fine arts education, largely modeled on the Japanese system, was also established during this period. In general, course offerings would follow the accepted categories of Western painting, Chinese painting (which was not part of the Shanghai Meizhuan curriculum until the fall of 1923), graphic design, art history and theory, and frequently music. (Courses on handicraft, widely instituted in the beginning years of the twentieth century, were gradually dropped from the curriculum of fine arts schools.) A student entering the Shanghai Meizhuan in the late 1920s would find all these courses on offer, and the curriculum at the Shanghai Art Teachers' College (which had renamed itself the Shanghai Art College around 1925) was just as comprehensive.<sup>72</sup> All the schools shared a common emphasis on training students to master figure drawing and the plein-air landscape sketch, using mediums from charcoal to oils. As a result, figure drawings and landscape sketches became synonymous with modern-style artwork.<sup>73</sup> Not only would such exercises be displayed at the ever-more-regular art shows, but they would also frequently appear as magazine inserts or covers, along with reproductions of masterpieces by Western artists.

In addition to legitimating fine arts education and popularizing Western painting, the flourishing art schools of the 1920s fostered the first generation of modern artists and art educators, for whom art was as much a passion as it was a profession. Most artists of this period, especially those returning from abroad, found themselves teaching at one point or another, either because they had been uprooted from the landed gentry class or because traditional practices of patronage had become untenable in the new urban environment. Even Zhu



Qizhan (1892–1996), an oil painter from a wealthy merchant family in Jiangsu, did not hesitate to teach at the fledgling Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts in 1915.<sup>74</sup> As both artists and educators, this generation of art makers firmly believed in the intrinsic value of art and viewed it as an indispensable social institution at the same time. The dual value they placed on art, and on aesthetic education in general, would be most pronounced in the notion of the “art movement,” which gathered momentum in the second half of the 1920s.

Just as far-reaching in consequence was the gathering and training of a large number of young art students, however short-lived or underdeveloped the schools they attended may have been. Indeed, the surge of new art schools during this period created a novel social space and institutional base for students to form art societies, organize exhibitions, experiment with new theories, and eventually to engage in political activities. Between 1924 and 1926, student unrest erupted at the National Fine Arts College in Beijing, the Shanghai Art College, and the Shanghai Meizhuan, a turn of events that at once reflected a prevalent restive mood among the student population and foreshadowed the forthcoming student activism.<sup>75</sup> The rise of political art and radical art movements in the early 1930s would not have been possible without the presence of large groups of art students in cities around the country. Furthermore, political activism among these students was often directly fueled by a growing discontent with the new institutions of art themselves.

### IN PURSUIT OF AN ART MOVEMENT

During the 1920s, the art movement that had the greatest impact on the field of art in China originated among Chinese art students studying in Europe. In May 1924, the *Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Chinese Art* opened in the French city of Strasbourg. Twenty-six Chinese students from across Europe participated, among them Xu Beihong, who had been studying oil painting in Paris for five years. The Strasbourg exhibition, celebrated at the time as the first exhibition of Chinese art in Europe, was initially proposed by two student associations based in France: the Phoebus Society (its French name given as the Association des artistes chinois en France) and the Fine Arts Work-study Society (Société chinoise des arts décoratifs à Paris).<sup>76</sup> While preparing for the exhibition, the two groups came together, clarified their goals, and declared the birth of the Overseas Art Movement Society.<sup>77</sup>

The leading artist, first of the Phoebus Society and then of the Overseas Art Movement Society, was Lin Fengmian. A native of Guangdong, Lin had arrived in France to study oil painting in 1919 with his friend Li Jinfa. By the time of the Strasbourg exhibition, Lin had spent four years in Paris and Berlin, traveled through Scandinavia, and emerged as a confident and visionary artist.<sup>78</sup> At this point, he appeared to be, as Michael Sullivan observes, “under the spell of German Expressionism.”<sup>79</sup> The imprint of expressionism was evident in his *Groping in the Dark* (no longer extant), which was shown in Strasbourg and widely regarded as the most important work of the exhibition. The large rectangular canvas portrayed, against



3 Lin Fengmian, *Will to Life*, 1924, ink and watercolor.

a murky background and with a Rodinesque distortion of the human figure, a group of pensive individuals moving horizontally from left to right. These full-size figures, most of them standing, included Homer, Virgil, Jesus, Dante Alighieri, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Hugo, and Dostoyevsky, all engaged in the search for truth and meaning. Never before had a Chinese artist attempted such an abstract theme, on such a large scale and in oils, and although all the figures were Western, as David Clarke notes, the subject matter of the painting “has no direct precedent in European painting.”<sup>80</sup> The painting, about 2 meters high and 4 meters wide, served as a visual manifesto of the Overseas Art Movement Society and was promptly hailed as Lin Fengmian’s masterpiece in reports back to the art circles in Shanghai.<sup>81</sup> Cai Yuanpei, honorary chair of the exhibition’s preparatory committee and now on his third sojourn in Europe, attended the opening of the exhibition and was struck by Lin Fengmian’s artistic vision. He found much to appreciate in Lin Fengmian’s *Will to Life*, a Chinese painting that contemporary critics believed to be in the style of the Lingnan school initiated by the Gao brothers (fig. 3).<sup>82</sup>

Three months earlier, issuing a call for submissions, the preparatory committee had explained that the Strasbourg exhibition would be a preparation for the upcoming international fine arts competition in Paris (referring to the *International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts* of 1925).<sup>83</sup> The public notice announced a much larger objective: “The fine arts of ancient China urgently need reorganization; ideas about fine arts from East and West demand synthesis and research; China’s new art of the future awaits creation.”<sup>84</sup> While the first two goals of this ambitious tripartite project had earlier been included on the agenda of the New Culture Movement—and were reiterated during the Strasbourg event by Cai Yuanpei<sup>85</sup>—the Overseas Art Movement Society now explicitly took it upon itself to realize the third goal: the creation of a distinct modern Chinese art.

However broad their conception of an art movement might have been at this point, members of the society quickly turned their attention back to China. Toward the end of 1924, Wang Daizhi, as a spokesperson for the society, returned to Shanghai to encourage Chinese participation in the upcoming Paris exposition. He met representatives from several art societies and organizations, including the Celestial Horse Society, the aesthetic-education committee of the Chinese Association for Educational Reforms, and the fine arts research society of the Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association. The meeting was coordinated by Liu Haisu, who later invited Wang to the Shanghai Meizhuan to talk about Chinese art students in France and the importance of promoting Chinese art abroad.<sup>86</sup> In April 1925, the *International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts* opened in Paris with a Chinese section, organized by Lin Fengmian and associates and endorsed by the Chinese consul. Architecture student Liu Jipiao (1900–?) oversaw the installation and designed a dancing dragon that appeared both on the cover of the catalogue and over the entrance to the Chinese section.<sup>87</sup>

Among the various art groups and associations active in Shanghai at the time, the Celestial Horse Society had a prominent profile.<sup>88</sup> Founded in 1919, the society attracted many renowned artists, and its chief ambition was to emulate the French Salon system and the Japanese Teiten.<sup>89</sup> Since the majority of society members were interested in oil painting, the eight exhibitions it organized significantly enhanced the visibility and cultural status of modern Western-style painting. "The Celestial Horse Society is an independent institution devoted to artistic research," stated Wang Jiyuan (1895–1974), then secretary of the society, in August 1923. "More precisely, it is a collective of workers engaged in the art movement." Acknowledging the society's financial constraints, Wang Jiyuan reiterated the group's noble mission and vowed that it would not "subject itself to the power of the capitalists and resort to fund-raising."<sup>90</sup> After its sixth exhibition in 1923, however, the Celestial Horse Society managed only two more shows, both significantly delayed, and finally dissolved in the spring of 1927.

By this time, Lin Fengmian and his associates had returned from Europe, bringing with them, in addition to their programmatic vision, a youthful self-confidence cultivated away from the dismaying reality in China. Their return in the second half of the 1920s foretold the coming dominance of European-trained artists in the modern art scene, which until then had been largely defined and developed by artists and theorists trained in Japan.

In January 1926, Lin Fengmian arrived in Shanghai as the "foremost among Chinese students studying art abroad."<sup>91</sup> Before he left France, Lin had accepted an appointment as dean of the National Beijing Art College, a position that Cai Yuanpei had urged then minister of education Yi Peiji (1880–1937) to offer to him. Having barely had a chance to unpack the many rolls of paintings that he had brought back with him, Lin headed north to Beijing, eager to start revitalizing the art school there. In the fall of 1925, two new departments, in music and drama, had been added to the school. The head of the music department was the distinguished composer Xiao Youmei, and the drama department was chaired by the American-

trained Zhao Taimou (1889–1968). (At the suggestion of the new faculty, the school had been renamed the National Beijing Art College.) While Zhao Taimou and his colleagues would soon turn the new drama department into the institutional base for a national theater movement, the painting departments languished and showed little sign of life.

As soon as he reached the capital in the north, Lin Fengmian, "in keeping with his spirit as a young artist," began implementing systematic reforms at the art school.<sup>92</sup> His objective was to continue the work that he had begun in Europe and to introduce new ideas and practices to artistic creation. He installed a studio system to ensure basic training, regularized the use of nude models in the classroom, encouraged extracurricular clubs and exhibitions, and hired new faculty. He invited the highly regarded but not formally schooled master Qi Baishi (1864–1957) to join the faculty of Chinese painting, and telegraphed his friend André Claudot (1892–1982) in Paris and urged him to come to Beijing. Lin had first met Claudot, a portrait and landscape painter with strong anarchist political beliefs, in 1920 when he arrived in France and entered the École des Beaux-Arts in Dijon. In the fall of 1926, Claudot arrived to chair the department of Western painting at the college and would remain in China until 1930.<sup>93</sup>

On March 10, 1926, as a way of introducing the new dean to the school, an exhibition of Lin Fengmian's works opened at the National Beijing Art College. In addition to *Groping in the Dark*, several other large-scale oil paintings were displayed, including *Quavering Gold*, *Human History*, and *Mr. Cai Yuanpei, Past and Present*. These last two works relied on composite images and symbols to convey a conceptual complexity. With a female nude at its center to evoke a primordial maternal presence and sexual drive, *Human History* comments on the glories and cruelties of the human race by juxtaposing a peacock, the Sphinx, a musician, a wine cup, and blood-stained swords. In his homage to Cai Yuanpei, Lin Fengmian presented two portraits of his hero, one young and one aged, alongside Apollo flanked by two muses. A markedly different mood and aesthetic came through in his ink-and-brush paintings, which included his earlier *Will to Life* and two pieces titled *Late Autumn* and *Spring Warmth*. While in his oil paintings Lin sought to explore concepts and present intellectual arguments, he made bold experiments in his *guohua* (national painting) pieces, combining techniques from Chinese and Western painting. Wang Daizhi, in an article introducing the exhibition, suggested that Lin Fengmian had reached a third, syncretic stage in his art, after two earlier stages, during which he had studied and mastered expressive Chinese painting and realistic Western painting, respectively.<sup>94</sup>

A substantive review of the exhibition came from Deng Yizhe (1892–1973), a philosophy professor at Beida. Hailing *Human History* as the artist's masterpiece, Deng noted that Lin Fengmian had chosen to study human subjects and themes through oils, but to depict landscapes and animals with ink and brush. What defined Lin's best works in either oil or ink, in the philosopher's view, was his reflexivity and pursuit of ideas. Deng did not regard *Groping in the Dark* as the most successful conceptual painting and thought the homage paid to Cai Yuanpei was rather empty. He was most appreciative of the artist's brushwork in *Dreams*



of the Past, where he believed Lin had masterfully expanded the visual idiom of the oil painting by using the technique of shading with black ink. "I wonder," he asked, "how European artists would react to this!"<sup>95</sup>

Lu Xun was among those who viewed the exhibition. Having published his first collection of short stories, *Outcry*, in 1923 and a volume of essays titled *Hot Breeze* in late 1925, Lu Xun was now a well-known author and a professor of Chinese fiction at the Teachers' College for Women. He had also translated two collections of critical essays by Kuriyagawa Hakuson (1880–1923), an influential Japanese literary critic. In his diary, Lu Xun recorded his March 15 visit to Lin Fengmian's exhibition, but he did not seem to be much impressed.

The most significant event of Lin Fengmian's tenure at the National Beijing Art College was the Art Convention, masterminded by Lin in spring 1927. Its stated purpose was to unite artistic talents in an effort "to practice a comprehensive art movement and to advance the artistic transformation of society."<sup>96</sup> Open to art societies and individual artists and sponsored by the National Beijing Art College, the convention included art exhibitions and music and drama performances. As a severe shortage of funds was affecting all the schools of higher education in Beijing, the convention initially met with general indifference and resistance, but Lin and his colleagues persisted and the convention opened on May 1, International Workers' Day.

Striking posters, featuring an image by Lin Fengmian, were pasted along city streets to help publicize the event, and a newsletter, *Light in the Sea*, was published for the same purpose. The newsletter included a lengthy essay by Li Puyuan (1901–1956), a talented student of drama, who discussed the relationship between the event and a broader art movement. Given that art was either ignored or abused in Chinese society, and given the failure of the art field to reach the populace and produce powerful artwork, he argued, a "movement toward artistic renovation" was in order. "An artist must first understand his own times and grasp the nodal points of the social consciousness of the age," he urged; only artwork that creatively revealed such nodal points could be regarded as truthful art, as opposed to an "ancient, unmodern, hypocritical, and lifeless art." "Artists, please open your eyes. Study your times, represent (*biaoxian*) your era, and express (*biaoxian*) its consciousness!"<sup>97</sup>

News about the Art Convention quickly traveled to Shanghai. On May 7, *Art Field Weekly* published an open letter from its editor congratulating Lin Fengmian.<sup>98</sup> The weekly also printed a detailed report on the event with a collection of slogans gathered from the National Beijing Art College campus:

Down with imitative, conventional art!  
Down with aristocratic art enjoyed by the minority!  
Down with unpopular art that is inaccessible to the people!  
Up with creative art that stands for an epoch!  
Up with people's (*quanmin*) art enjoyed by all classes!  
Up with folk (*minjian*) art that represents the crossroads!

Artists of the nation, unite!

Artists from East and West, unite!

Thinkers and artists of the world, as guides of human culture, unite!<sup>99</sup>

Evidently, these demands resonated with Li Puyuan's call for a socially responsive and truthful art. They may also have been inspired by Claudot the anarchist. Many years later, the French professor would recall being in contact with Communist sympathizers during his stay in Beijing and joining them in protest against political repression when the warlord Zhang Zuolin (1875–1928) came to power.<sup>100</sup> Not all the ideas voiced by students agreed with Lin Fengmian's notion of an "artistic transformation of society," however; they exceeded Lin's artistic vision by pointing to a radical transformation of art and of artistic practices themselves. The term "crossroads" was commonly used as a metaphor for the social reality beyond the artist's studio, its opposite being the "ivory tower," which stood for self-indulgence and insulation from social life.<sup>101</sup> Many students sought a public art that would engage the crossroads, entailing artists ready to commit their art to a social cause.

Lin Fengmian clearly saw the implications of such demands and published, during the Art Convention, a brief essay on the supposed conflict between "art for art's sake" and "art for society's sake." Asserting that artists and art critics differ in their approaches to art, he saw no conflict between these two doctrines. Art, he stated, "is fundamentally an expression of excited human emotion, made entirely for the sake of creation and with no concern for social function." He cautioned against constraining an artist with any formula and stressed that "art of the present is not national, nor private, but belongs to all humanity."<sup>102</sup> He also affirmed his commitment to a liberal-humanist conception of art, to which his major oil paintings of 1927, such as *Among the People* and *The Human Way*, were a visual testimony. Deng Yizhe, too, was uneasy with the notion of a "public art" or "people's art" and voiced his reservations around the same time.<sup>103</sup>

In his "Open Letter to the Art Field of the Nation," written after he had left Beijing for the south in the fall of 1927, Lin Fengmian directly addressed his fellow artists across the country with a more comprehensive statement on his artistic beliefs. Initially circulated among selected individuals, the letter was intended as a reflection on the faltering art movement and an appeal for redoubled endeavors. Until that time, Lin wrote, participants in the decade-long art movement had believed that the only way to remedy the deplorable status of art in Chinese society was to create viable and genuine works of art. With this belief and a spirit of self-sacrifice, he and his comrades had "locked themselves in their studio," trying to create Western-style masterpieces. Yet such hard work seemed to have had little effect, and the art movement could hardly protect itself from "willful adversity." Lin now proposed that a coordinated publicity campaign in defense of art would be just as indispensable as artistic creation.

Reiterating his assertion that art was a product of emotion, Lin Fengmian argued further that art provided vital emotional solace for mankind. Elaborating on the same humanist

narrative that Cai Yuanpei had introduced a decade before, Lin related that European art had first acquired independence from and gradually replaced religion in the modern age: the magic power of art revealed itself in liberating the human being from the "iron grip of theology." He then went on to exalt art for its transcendental beauty and transformative power, repeating Cai's caution against neglecting aesthetic education in a cultural movement.

In directing his gaze on contemporary China, Lin admitted that all forms of art popular in China, from traditional theater to architecture, made him "boundlessly depressed." Native opera and music struck him as particularly primitive, formulaic, and reactionary. Such an underdeveloped state of art, he believed, was inseparable from rampant malaise, disorder, and inhumanity. The remedy for this situation lay in the promotion of uplifting art and the building up of institutions, and the most effective way to do this was to utilize the prestige and resources of the government—because, Lin argued, "in China, no matter how you look at it, it is still necessary to start things from above." Advocating for a national art academy that would train more artists, Lin also called for an art exhibition that would give the public a chance to view art and decide which form was the most appropriate for the times. He pleaded for the country's artists to stop their infighting and to assume their responsibility to art and to the nation: "Comrades in the art field of our nation, it is now time that we became united and worked hard for an art movement!"<sup>104</sup> A testimony to his personal convictions, Lin's letter may also be read as a policy statement. In November 1927, Lin Fengmian was appointed chair of the Art Education Commission of the University Council. The art movement he envisioned thus self-consciously became part of the ambitious nation-building project undertaken by the Nanjing regime.

On New Year's Day, 1928, the first *Capital Fine Arts Exhibition* opened to the public in Nanjing, showcasing artists who would soon constitute the faculty of the new National Art Academy, with Lin Fengmian as the main attraction. The Art Education Commission had recommended that scenic West Lake in Hangzhou, a site that had attracted many artists in the past, be developed into an "art district" for the new academy.<sup>105</sup> Lin Wenzheng (1903–1989), a key member of the Overseas Art Movement Society, had recently returned from France and, on the occasion of the *Capital Fine Arts Exhibition*, wrote an effusive essay hailing "the avant-garde in the art field of China." He celebrated the show as a sign of the forthcoming artistic transformation of the new capital, even a symbol of the future glory of the Republic itself. "Over is the age in which art was either monopolized by kings and emperors, or possessed exclusively by the gentry and merchants! The twentieth century is an age in which the public will enjoy art together!"<sup>106</sup> The exhibition marked the arrival of the art movement in the new national capital, and the learned Lin Wenzheng asserted himself as its leading theorist.

Soon after the *Capital Fine Arts Exhibition*, the *Central Daily*, official newspaper of the Nanjing government, was made available to Lin Fengmian and his comrades as a powerful resource. On February 11, 1928, the newspaper reported that preparations for "the highest institution for art education in China" were all set. Two days later, Lin Wenzheng published,

in the "Modeng" column (a transliteration of "Modern"), an essay outlining the purpose, organization, and pedagogy of the new art academy. He deplored the "bankrupt, desolate, and lifeless" character of the contemporary art field and dismissed the existing private art schools as misguided. He stated that an art academy needed to train two types of students: those who would be engaged in artistic creation, and those who would be committed to art education: "We believe that the achievement of an art movement does not consist in a few creative artists, but rather in everyone having artistic training and interests."<sup>107</sup> He was confident that West Lake would be comparable to Italy's Florence during the European Renaissance.

Less than a week later, Lin Wenzheng published another essay in the *Central Daily* to press home the urgent need for a credible art movement that would complement the movements in politics, culture, and literature that had unfolded since the May Fourth period.<sup>108</sup> This essay, together with two other pieces by Li Puyuan and the sculptor Liu Kaiqu (1904–1993), initiated a weekly supplement called *Art Movement*. In the second installment of his essay, Lin Wenzheng wrote that the first task of an art movement was to generate publicity, "because publicity is the most powerful weapon of all modern movements," and that the art movement's two basic responsibilities were to introduce Western art and to systematically reorganize native art from the past, though "introduction outweighs reorganization at the present."<sup>109</sup>

It was now widely known that Lin Fengmian was to head the National Art Academy. To further publicize his work and stature, a solo exhibition of his paintings had been presented in Shanghai in late February. Cai Yuanpei had certainly taken into account the tremendous intellectual and artistic talents that the Overseas Art Movement Society had brought together by charging Lin Fengmian with the historic task of being the academy's first head. Cai could have selected Liu Haisu, but the recent student unrest at the Shanghai Meizhuan must have caused some concern. Moreover, Cai might have decided that Liu's lack of systematic training in Western art could compromise efforts to build a credible modern academy. (Liu would claim many years later that he had declined, in late July 1927, Cai's offer to upgrade the Shanghai Meizhuan to a national art academy.<sup>110</sup>) Cai was certainly instrumental in making it possible for Liu to go to Europe for a remedial educational tour, which began in February 1929 after a well-publicized farewell exhibition and ended in September 1931, when Liu returned to China.

Another possible candidate for the prestigious position was Xu Beihong, who had settled in Shanghai in 1927 after eight years of rigorous training in France. Identifying with the classical academic style, Xu had little regard for the formal innovations Lin brought to his canvas. (Li Jinfa, who was a close friend of Lin Fengmian during their Paris days, believed that Lin turned to modernist styles because he had a less-than-solid command of basic drawing skills.<sup>111</sup>) Cai Yuanpei had known Xu Beihong much longer than he had known Lin Fengmian, but he was probably more impressed with Lin's unreserved endorsement of aesthetic education. Moreover, Xu's involvement in a "bohemian" art movement and his famed stubbornness may have cast doubt over his ability to lead a national institution. Nonetheless, in



February 1928, Xu Beihong was invited to head the painting section of the art department at the newly created Central University in Nanjing. In their respective roles at these two highly prestigious and politically significant educational institutions, Xu and Lin would systematically put into practice their artistic visions and exert a lasting impact on the development of art and fine arts education in modern China.

In March 1928, the *Central Daily* supplement *Art Movement* published an essay by artist-essayist Sun Fuxi (1898–1962), soon to be appointed professor of graphic design at the new National Art Academy. Sun was exuberant in praising Lin Fengmian for his unparalleled talent and for being a noble benefactor to Chinese youth. In presenting scenic West Lake as a worthy tribute to the lauded artist laureate, Sun also mixed in a cautionary message: “The first kind of talents trained by the academy should be artists who will be the mouthpiece of society and express emotions that are not yet expressible by society.”<sup>112</sup>

The launch of *Art Movement* signaled the official homecoming and recognition of the Overseas Art Movement Society, four years after its formation in France. Having a government newspaper, with all its symbolic power, as a resource and forum had never before been possible for other art groups, and it now enabled Lin Fengmian and his colleagues to conduct an extended publicity campaign for the cause and sanctity of art. In relentlessly urging unity, commitment, and creativity, and in tirelessly broadcasting the gospel of art, they made it abundantly clear that theirs was primarily a constructive movement *for* art, its central objective being to establish art as a cultural, educational, and social institution. Over the summer of 1928, the journey of the Overseas Art Movement Society was completed when faculty members at the National Art Academy formed the Art Movement Society.<sup>113</sup> In the following years, the society held four exhibitions, the second in Tokyo (1930) and the fourth in Shanghai (1934), and published several academic journals, but it remained largely an academic group dedicated to scholarly research.

The creation of the National Art Academy in March 1928 was undoubtedly the greatest achievement of the Overseas Art Movement Society in its quest to establish art as a legitimate modern institution. Lin Fengmian's insistence on the necessity of government support and resources for art to obtain institutional viability in contemporary China would determine the methodic approach that he and Lin Wenzheng, the heart and brain of the new academy, would adopt in administering the institution. It also explains their eagerness to shield the fledgling institution from any disruption—political activism, in particular. In retrospect, the self-insulating academic ivory tower that Sun Fuxi had cautioned against seemed to the two Lins to be the only way to safeguard the academy from being ruined or overwhelmed altogether.

From the very beginning, the administration at the National Art Academy made it abundantly clear that disciplinary order was fundamental to institutional development. On March 26, classes began with an enrollment of about seventy students, but the unfinished state of the school's classrooms and other buildings made it necessary to postpone the inauguration ceremony. When students asked for improvements on the second day, their request was re-

jected, and one student was summarily expelled by the dean. This incident sparked much anger and protest, and swiftly grew into a campus-wide boycott of classes. In the process, the student body organized itself and demanded that, in addition to retracting all expulsions, the school should offer a course on the history of Chinese art and make available textbooks on anatomy and Western art history. The school administration followed its zero tolerance policy, however. Alleging subversion by Communist agents, it called in the police, a curfew was imposed, more students were expelled, and at least one student was arrested.<sup>114</sup>

On April 9, 1928, the unrest had barely died down when the academy's opening ceremony, with an accompanying exhibition of faculty works, took place. Some forty guests attended the ceremony, including Cai Yuanpei, who had arrived two days earlier to personally help pacify the agitated student body. In his keynote speech, Cai explained why it had been important to establish the National Art Academy by West Lake and in the midst of the ongoing Northern Expedition. He described art as the expression of a pure desire to create, a necessary antidote to the secular desire to possess. He then switched to the present situation and issued a stern warning. Claiming that ulterior political motives had caused the recent trouble, Cai asked those interested in politics to go somewhere else: “The Art Academy is entirely devoted to art. When it comes to talented and creative students, we would be as contented with ten thousand of them as with just one.”<sup>115</sup>

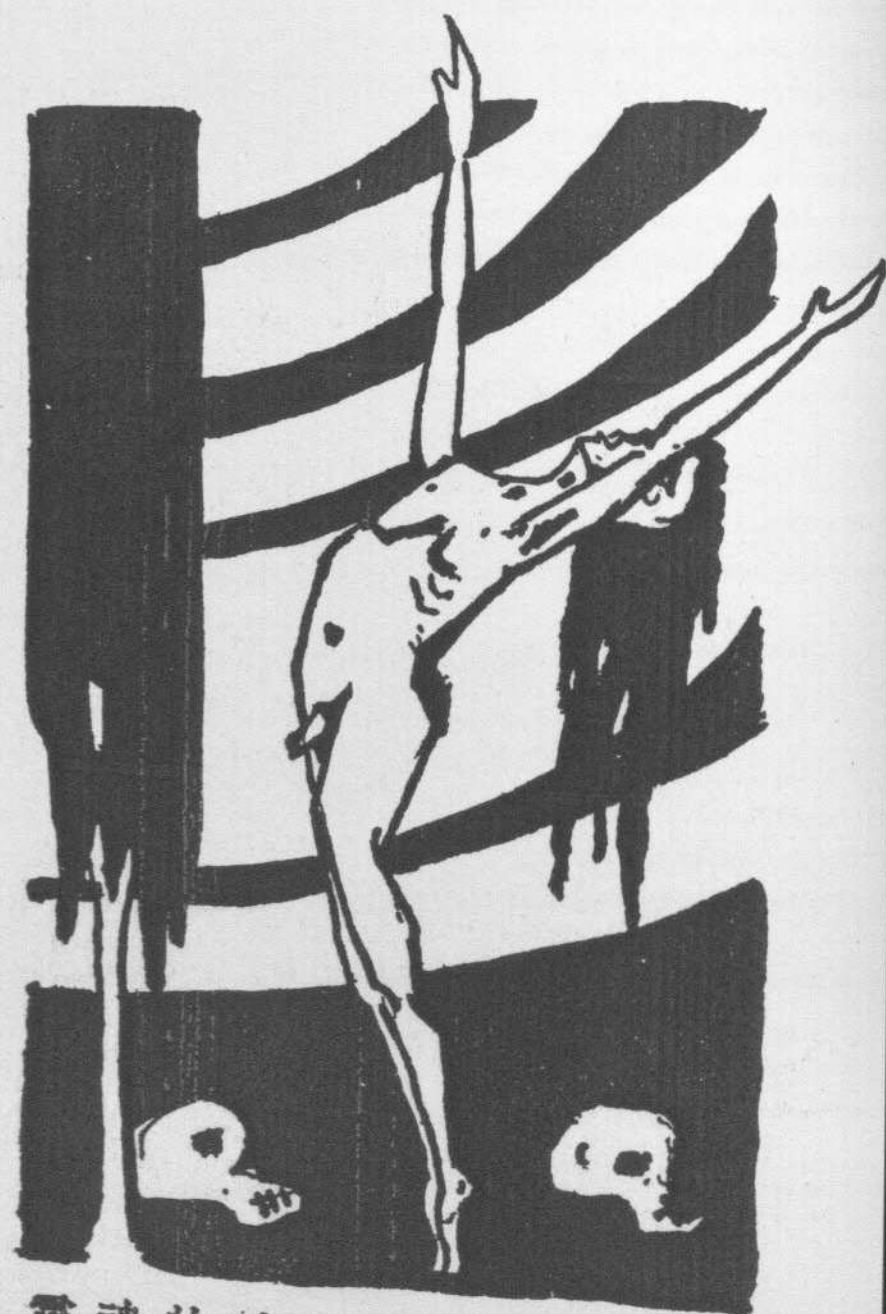
Cai Yuanpei must have felt particularly gratified on this historic occasion, despite the jarring note of student discontent. A decade before, on April 15, 1918, he had given a speech at the opening of the National Fine Arts College in Beijing. Now, the newly established central government in Nanjing promised to end the era of warlordism, and the National Art Academy had all the necessary conditions for success. It boasted an energetic and talented faculty, most of them trained in Europe. Compared to the two modest departments of painting and design that had been set up at the Beijing National Fine Arts College, the curriculum at the National Art Academy in Hangzhou was much more comprehensive. From the beginning, the academy was able to offer classes on Chinese and Western painting, graphic design (including architecture), sculpture, music, art history, and French as a foreign language. Cai had no doubt that the academy would be a truly national institution and a landmark in the modernization of fine arts education in China. His efforts over the previous fifteen years were finally paying off.

Other than presiding over the ceremony, Lin Fengmian did not present a formal speech at the academy's opening. He would spell out what he expected of the entering class and the academy itself in two separate speeches, later published in the campus journal, *Apollo*. Here, he explained that the art movement had two components: the artist and the audience; the artist needed to be innovative and to free himself of the shackles of the past, and his art should have an educational and purifying effect on its audience. Using these two criteria, he surmised that there were no credible artists in China, nor was there any true art. Speaking as dean of the National Art Academy, Lin was particularly harsh in blaming the large number of privately owned art schools for churning out incompetent graduates and, worse, for making

money off students and faculty. He found it maddening that an eighteen-year-old with no formal training should have been allowed to start an art school and even earn a reputation.<sup>116</sup>

On a more positive and inspirational note, Lin Fengmian called upon the academy's students to participate in the upcoming national art exhibition, the first ever to be organized by the government. He reminded them of their historical mission and responsibility, since the academy was now the only government-sponsored institution of art education.<sup>117</sup> He urged them to have hope and become true artists, possessing an artist's heart and special skills for expression. The true artist, he proclaimed, was a healing doctor as well as a devoted saint who needed to look beyond "the inferior tastes of the nation" and put his heart into producing noble works of art; once those "pathetic compatriots" were saved, there would be hope for art in China.<sup>118</sup> This salvation was the true purpose of the emerging art movement, Lin Fengmian concluded, a movement that in turn would contribute to a general civilizational renaissance in China.





靈魂的叫喊

迅雷作

## 2

### Art Theory as Passionate Discourse on Subjectivity

43

On February 15, 1928, a recruiting notice for the National Art Academy appeared in *Shun Pao*, amid an assortment of notices advertising the Shanghai Meizhuan, the Shanghai Art College, the China College of Art, Fudan University, and numerous other schools. The ad for the National Art Academy stood out, not only because it was the sole state-sponsored institution, but also because its logo sported art-deco-style graphics. On February 20, the Southern Art Institute ran an ad, with its heading rendered in elegant classical *li*-style calligraphy, immediately next to that of the National Art Academy. In contrast to the academy's dry, factual announcement, the Southern Art Institute proclaimed that it sought to prepare young people for "the revolutionary movement in art" during a chaotic age. The institute intended to admit twenty students each in the fields of literature, painting, and drama, the advertisement announced; it would also create a special class to accommodate gifted students with no formal training.

"Manifesto on the Creation of the Southern Art Institute" had appeared earlier in *Shun Pao*, at the end of January. "The arrival of a new age always relies on a potent art movement as its vanguard," it stated. The new institute, striving for a "simple and sincere style," would comprise the three departments noted in its later ad: literature was to be headed by Tian Han; painting, by Xu Beihong; drama, by Ouyang Yuqian.<sup>1</sup> Within a week, the institute had published its first recruiting notice in the *Central Daily*, where it characterized the current time as "the pregnant stage of a new epoch." This ad also announced that the founders of the institute (later referred to by its French title, the Académie d'Art du Midi) were all bohemian and ready to roam the country for the sake of art.<sup>2</sup>

Before the manifesto made its appearance, newspaper reports about the forthcoming Southern Art Institute had already aroused much interest in Shanghai. In response to the recruiting notice, many applicants made inquiries, eager to attend the institute for little or no fee. To accommodate the demand, Tian Han, the institute's visionary creator, decided to lower school tuition, even though he knew that in a society governed by capitalist logic, the independent institute would not survive without a substantial income.<sup>3</sup> He expressed his resolve

to his students: "We have no money, no aid from the government or businesses, but what is the worry? Can't those without property make art?"<sup>4</sup> On February 24, with little fanfare, classes began at the institute's campus on Route Hervé de Sieyes in the French Concession, a desolate street that the first (and only) class of students affectionately embraced as their own bohemian Latin Quarter.<sup>5</sup> When the installation of an indoor theater was completed two days later, an opening ceremony was held with about thirty students present. Tian Han took the opportunity to reiterate the mission of the institute and vowed to support "artistic research by penniless young people."<sup>6</sup>

If the juxtaposition of their separate recruiting ads in *Shun Pao* was a coincidence, the competition and mutual disdain between the National Art Academy and the independent, proudly populist Southern Art Institute were deliberate and ideologically determined. They reflected the structural tension between an established order and its discontents, between a dominant institution and antiestablishment impulses. Through his institution-building adventure, Tian Han expressed an understanding of art and the art movement that may have paralleled but eventually diverged from the liberal-humanist tradition represented by Liu Haisu and Lin Fengmian. In the present chapter, we will first follow the intellectual paths of Guo Moruo and Tian Han, both of whom were exposed to and enamored of a neo-romantic discourse in Taishō Japan but would go on to pursue separate creative careers in China. By turning our attention to the Creation Society, one of the most influential and paradigmatic literary groups throughout the 1920s, and the Southern Art Institute, we will see how students returning from Japan during the 1920s contributed to the making of the cultural left wing. Especially in 1928, when the newly formed Nanjing government was denounced by the Communists as having betrayed efforts for a broad social revolution, returning students brought with them Marxist theories on revolutionary literature and proletarian art, called for a new enlightenment, and prepared for what they believed to be "a legitimate intrusion into art history" and beyond.<sup>7</sup> Here we will see how art theories and discussions in the 1920s served as a surrogate discourse on subjectivity that predicated an exhilarating and ultimately fulfilling encounter with history. We will also witness the origins of a politically active new movement in fine arts that was to unfold in the early 1930s.

### THE EXPRESSIONIST IMPERATIVE

In the fall of 1916, Tian Han arrived in Tokyo, a wide-eyed teenager from the Chinese inland province of Hunan. Unlike most of the thousands of Chinese students gathered in Tokyo at the time, Tian Han was instantly attracted to cinema, spending many hours in movie theaters in the Asakusa and Kanda districts.<sup>8</sup> His fascination with what he would call "a silver dream" also led him to enjoy the writings on film by Tanizaki Junichirō (1886–1965). Tian Han's enduring passion, however, was drama, and he became deeply inspired by the new theater movement associated with Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871–1918) and Matsui Sumako

(1886–1919). Attending many productions of Western-style plays, he acquired concrete knowledge of modern European drama and soon aspired to be "a budding Ibsen in China."<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the ambitious young man had a keen interest in contemporary events and social theories. In late spring 1919, still in Tokyo, Tian Han joined the Young China Association, a student organization formed in Beijing during the rising New Culture Movement. The goal of the society was to promote a scientific spirit and encourage participation in social activity in order to bring about a youthful China befitting the twentieth century.

In 1920, Tian Han, now enrolled at the Tokyo Superior Normal College, filled out a career survey conducted by the Young China Association.<sup>10</sup> Asked about his long-term career goal, Tian Han replied, in English, "Art"; the professions he wanted to pursue, he wrote, were "Playwright, Poetry expression, Painting." As to when and where he would start, his answer was declarative: "Now. Here."<sup>11</sup> He had become a frequent contributor to the journal *Young China*, publishing essays on Walt Whitman and Friedrich Nietzsche in its pages. Yet his "search for the land of ecstasy" brought about by neo-romanticism demanded more gratifying outlets.<sup>12</sup> For Tian Han and his contemporaries, "neo-romanticism" described more than the latest European literary styles and trends after naturalism: it evoked a utopian vision of the working class as a new social entity that would reconcile the conflicts between life and art, body and soul, reality and the ideal, as bourgeois and aristocratic societies had been unable to do.<sup>13</sup> Neo-romanticism, a code name for the liberalism and sociodemocratic aspirations of Taishō Democracy, was believed to have the magic power of turning life into an artistic experience.

In Guo Moruo, another Chinese student in Japan and six years his senior, Tian Han would find a sympathetic listener and "a support for a drunkard like me."<sup>14</sup> Hailing from Sichuan, Guo Moruo had arrived in Tokyo via the Korean peninsula at the beginning of 1914. By 1916, he was attending the medical school in Fukuoka. The meeting between Tian Han and Guo Moruo was facilitated by Zong Baihua (1897–1986), a student of German at the Tongchi University in Shanghai. Zong had first made acquaintance with Tian Han through the journal *Young China*. After he became editor of a weekly literary supplement to a Shanghai newspaper in 1919, Zong published several of Guo Moruo's poetic submissions without knowing who the exuberant new-style poet was. In a letter to Tian Han, Zong enthusiastically recommended Guo as "the poet of the future in the East." Tian Han at once contacted Guo, and the two found much to share in their views about art and life before they ever met. "We artists," proclaimed Tian Han in one letter, "should on the one hand expose the dark side of life, reject all worldly hypocrisy, and create a foundation for life; on the other hand, we should work even harder to lead people on to an artistic realm, and to make life an artistic experience."<sup>15</sup>

In March 1920, Tian Han traveled to Fukuoka to meet his spiritual friend. On his way to southwestern Japan, he stopped in Kyoto and visited Zheng Boqi (1895–1979), another student interested in art and drama. Together they paid a visit to the Japanese literary critic Kuriyagawa Hakuson, whose introductory writings on modern European literature had educated



many young readers. Once in Fukuoka, Tian Han and Guo Moruo shared their responses to Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Faust*, read poems by Heinrich Heine together, prepared their correspondence for publication, went on sightseeing expeditions, and, in keeping with the literati tradition, improvised poetry while partaking of liquor and surveying cherry blossoms. They also posed for a photograph, standing shoulder to shoulder in the same pose assumed by Goethe and Friedrich Schiller in a bronze statue they had appreciated.<sup>16</sup>

The self-appointed Chinese Goethe and Schiller saw each other again in Tokyo in June 1920. Guo Moruo, who traveled between China and Japan frequently during this period, was in Tokyo for a brief visit, the main purpose of which was to find ways to create a literary journal. Tian Han had by then published his "neo-romantic tragedy" *Violin and Rose in Young China* and had written, directed, and staged a one-act play titled *Halo*.<sup>17</sup> Guo Moruo had been just as prolific as a poet, translator, and essayist. While in Shanghai, he had finished editing his first free-verse collection, *Goddesses*.<sup>18</sup> The idea of publishing a Chinese magazine of "pure literature" as one could find in Japan had been brewing for some time among a small group of Chinese students. In visiting first Kyoto and then Tokyo, Guo Moruo rallied Zheng Boqi, Tian Han, Yu Dafu (1896–1945), Cheng Fangwu (1897–1984), and Zhang Ziping (1893–1959) to contribute to the collective project.

On June 8, 1920, this group of young men gathered near the campus of the Tokyo Imperial University and confirmed their commitment to putting out a literary quarterly under the name *Creation*.<sup>19</sup> This meeting marked the formation of the Creation Society, although the journal *Creation* would not appear until May 1922, almost two years later. Guo's experimental *Goddesses* would come out in September 1921 as the first title in the Creation Society Series, quickly attracting attention and critical acclaim. Yu Dafu's *Sinking* was also issued as part of the series in October and would be widely recognized as the first important collection of short stories written in plain-spoken Chinese. The first issue of *Creation* (with *La Kreo* as its Esperanto title) was edited by Guo Moruo and finished up by Yu Dafu. It featured literary works, critical essays, and translations provided almost entirely by participants at the June 1920 gathering, including poetry by Guo Moruo and Cheng Fangwu, fiction by Yu Dafu and Zhang Ziping, and a single-act play by Tian Han. In place of a formal manifesto, Guo Moruo's hymn to "the Creator" served to introduce the journal as well as a new cosmic imagination: "Blow, blow, autumn wind! / Let me flourish, flourish my sharp pen! / Knowing that a divine encounter is approaching, / I will endeavor to create!" The poem continues with fantastic anthropomorphic images of the spirit of creation that animates the universe and with a pledge: "I will dedicate a glorious song to the first newborn, / I will dedicate a glorious song to the grand self that breaks open the vast wilderness."<sup>20</sup>

The birth of the Creation Society in the contemporary literary field has conventionally been characterized as "the sudden eruption of an unknown army," a description that Guo Moruo would find accurate and even endearing.<sup>21</sup> The impact of this little-known force epitomizes how a romantic hypertrophy of the self would enthrall and agitate a young generation continually frustrated by the reality of a postdynastic and fast-disintegrating China.

The most salient feature of writings by the early Creators is an ardent affirmation of an expansive, libidinous, and tormented self. The grand project of creation was equated to an uninhibited expression of the innermost desires, which was also posited as the driving force of the universe. The origin or stimulus of such restive interiority often revealed itself to be a potent admixture of nineteenth-century German romanticist discourse and a more amorphous fin-de-siècle neo-romanticism that ranged from aestheticism to proto-socialism, to the more recent expressionism and even futurism.<sup>22</sup> This Europe-centered psychic orientation is evident in the content of the inaugural issue of *Creation*, which featured Guo Moruo's introduction to his translation of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. To Shen Congwen (1902–1988), an eager young reader in Beijing, the almost inspirational appeal of *Creation* was the desperate but heroic outcry that vibrated through its pages. Years later, as an accomplished writer, Shen would comment that the greatest achievement of the Creation Society lay in "presenting us with a new school that was bent on voicing our own anguish, and in showing us how to scream."<sup>23</sup>

*Creation's* raw and uninhibited outcry was as much the declaration of a new creative subject as it was a defiant challenge to the existing literary field. The perception of the Creation Society as an unexpected intervention grew more from its confident antiestablishment posture than from its neo-romantic poetics. Before the society came into being, Cheng Fangwu had expressed his despair at the failing efforts of the New Culture Movement in China.<sup>24</sup> By the time Yu Dafu issued an advance notice announcing the publication of *Creation*, "a Pure Literary Quarterly," in a Shanghai newspaper on September 29, 1921, he had apparently identified a clear target.

Since the cultural movement began, the new literature in our country has been monopolized by one or two idols, while fresh energy in the art field is completely wasted. Members of the Creation Society will rise to break social conventions, advocate the independence of art, and seek to develop together with all unknown writers in an effort to create a national literature for the future China.<sup>25</sup>

No names were given, but the opposition between an existing monopoly and the rebellious "unknown writers" was clearly articulated. Indeed, the antiestablishment posture of the latter would establish a lasting paradigm in the redefined field of modern literature.<sup>26</sup> Guo Moruo was at first concerned about the aggressive tone of the notice, but he appreciated Yu Dafu's courage and decided to offer his endorsement. The few spurious literary critics, he concurred, were as base as politicians in their intolerance and sectarianism. Moreover, "they love to regulate the free human heart with a rigid doctrine, such as naturalism or humanism," their wish to straitjacket a writer resembling the tyranny of a monarch.<sup>27</sup>

The rigid and repressive establishment in the new literature that Yu Dafu and Guo Moruo resented was soon identified as the Literary Research Association, an organization that had formally announced its formation a few months earlier, on January 4, 1921. On that day,

more than twenty writers and scholars gathered at Central Park in Beijing and adopted a charter for the group, which aspired to grow, eventually, into a national writers' union. Shortly before, Shen Yanbing (1896–1981, better known as Mao Dun later in life), a founding member of the association, had taken charge of *Short Story Magazine*, published by the prestigious Commercial Press in Shanghai. "Manifesto of the Literary Research Association" consequently appeared in the January 10, 1921, issue of the magazine, which was now significantly reorganized to serve as the association's de facto organ.

The first need that the Literary Research Association wished to satisfy, according to the manifesto, was to enhance exchange and understanding among writers, especially those engaged in new literature, so that a "central collective" could be formed. The association would aim at creating a writers' union because its members believed that "literature is a kind of work, and a much-needed work for human life at that."<sup>28</sup> Literature should no longer be viewed as entertainment or a means of escaping reality, it proclaimed. To elaborate on the new function of literature, Shen Yanbing also published an essay in which he described the writer's role. The time for a writer to be no more than an embellishing ornament was over, he wrote: "A literary person is now an important element in the progress of culture; a literary work is no longer for diversion, but the only tool for communicating human emotions and for making a vocal appeal for humanity."<sup>29</sup> Like the role of the artist or art educator, the identity and function of the new writer in postimperial China had to be clarified and affirmed, and the strategy adopted by the Literary Research Association was to promote literature as a noble and necessary profession.<sup>30</sup>

The same revamped issue of *Short Story Magazine* also listed systematic reforms to be implemented in the journal itself. Editorial impartiality was promised when it came to different schools, whether they adhered to an "art for art's sake" or an "art for life's sake" philosophy. Yet the editor stressed the importance of encouraging realist literature and vowed to institute rigorous literary criticism, as had been the practice in the modern West.<sup>31</sup> The guiding principle behind these reforms was the mission that the Literary Research Association pledged to accomplish: to study and introduce world literature, to reorganize traditional Chinese literature, and to create a new literature.<sup>32</sup> Similar to Lü Cheng's tripartite approach to realizing a "revolution in fine arts," articulated in 1919, and to the Overseas Art Movement Society's goals, stated in 1924, the association's mission reinforced the pivotal components of a grand cultural renaissance in modern China.

Guided by such a comprehensive and reassuring vision and supported by the resourceful Commercial Press, *Short Story Magazine* in Shen Yanbing's able hands quickly turned into a major institution in promoting modern literary styles and setting new trends. A "Literary Research Association era" blossomed, enchanting many young readers, who would find in *Short Story Magazine* a respected literary journal that carried on the New Culture Movement in spirit and style. Besides this flagship journal, the association also put out several other periodicals and book series, all part of a concerted effort to seek the development and consolidation of literature as a new vocation. At the same time, in order to create a centralized or-

ganization, association members formed local branches in many cities and sought to attract as many interested individuals as possible. As early as 1920, Zheng Zhenduo (1898–1958) had contacted Tian Han and invited him, together with Guo Moruo and Cheng Fangwu, to join the soon-to-be-established association. In May 1921, Shen Yanbing and Zheng Zhenduo met with Guo Moruo in Shanghai and again extended the invitation, yet Guo politely declined, apparently not aware of the initial contact through Tian Han.<sup>33</sup> In the meantime, the Literary Research Association was highly successful in developing a large membership that would boast not only noteworthy contemporary writers, but also figures not necessarily known for their literary works at the time, such as Ouyang Yuqian, Feng Zikai, and dramatist Xiong Foxi (1900–1965).<sup>34</sup> This practice, disdainfully described by Cheng Fangwu as "dragging people in line," would eventually draw much displeasure from the less-resourceful Creation Society.<sup>35</sup>

Against an extensive literary institution that seemed bent on replicating the structure of a political party, Guo Moruo poignantly portrayed the new Creation Society as a free and open association. "What we detest the most is an organized collective, because a collective is already a form of violence. It may commit all sorts of bizarre deeds in the name of its number and might."<sup>36</sup> The exploitative relationship into which Guo and his friends had to enter with a slippery publisher in order to bring *Creation* into being only made them all the more resentful of the steady financial backing enjoyed by the Literary Research Association. Well over thirty years later, in a radically changed political and institutional environment, Cheng Fangwu would still insist on distinguishing the poor and innocent Creation Society from the Literary Research Association, noting that the latter had been propped up by capitalists and rich bosses.<sup>37</sup>

Also integral to the Literary Research Association's ambition to mold the new literary field was its endorsement of realist literature. In detailing reforms to be carried out in *Short Story Magazine* in the January 10, 1921, issue, Shen Yanbing noted that realism was in decline as a literary trend in Europe, but asserted that it still needed more concrete introduction in contemporary China. Nonrealist writing might also be accepted, he stated, but realism would function as the foundation from which advancement to a higher stage would become possible. Shen Yanbing embraced realism out of strategic considerations. Convinced that a universal literary evolution based on European literary history would culminate, after the classicist, romanticist, and realist stages, in neo-romanticism, he had argued in 1920 that the new literary movement in China, if it wanted to be true to human life, ought to develop in the direction of neo-romanticism.<sup>38</sup> However, his new position as a trendsetter and spokesperson for the Literary Research Association brought him to see in realist literature an effective antidote against the formulaic and self-indulgent popular romances, known as "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly" fiction, that dominated the book market at the time. Moreover, as a literary technique realism would exemplify the modernity of new literature, while its commitment to objective description would also help promote a scientific and democratic ethos and culture. In deciding that realism (occasionally interchangeable with naturalism) would



best serve Chinese society at that time, Shen Yanbing adopted the argument that Chen Duxiu had made through *New Youth* in 1917. A national, realist, and social literature, for Chen Duxiu, was the path for modernizing traditional Chinese writing, which had kept the Chinese from opening their eyes "to observe the trends in social literature of the world or the spirit of an epoch."<sup>39</sup>

When systematically advocated in the pages of *Short Story Magazine*, realism struck Guo Moruo as a rigid standard and aroused deep suspicions. His reaction was directed less against the notion of realist literature than against its endorsement by an institutional voice. In response, Guo Moruo made a defiant claim in the second issue of *Creation* that the Creation Society embraced no uniform doctrine and had no written charter. Cheng Fangwu would explain the matter more plainly: "The Literary Research Association may promote naturalism, and as long as they do not oppress others in the name of a majority, we do not need to stand up and oppose them."<sup>40</sup> Yet soon Guo Moruo and his colleagues realized that their position could best be defined by rejecting the realist doctrine in favor of subjective expression. As a result, a theoretical debate over the merits of naturalism versus expressionism ensued, with participants from both sides quickly resorting to two popular slogans, "art for life" and "art for art," to simplify and summarize their divergent beliefs. The series of exchanges, as Cheng Fangwu was fully aware, was the admissible cover for an unpleasant "fistfight" that a few "silly intruders" put up against an entrenched "vast empire."<sup>41</sup> More often, the fistfight would degenerate into what Shen Yanbing in his old age lamented as a hurtful "messy brawl," from which hardly anyone could emerge as a clear or clean victor.<sup>42</sup>

The headstrong rebellion by the Creation Society had a visual dimension as well. The first issue of *Creation*, which featured two large Chinese characters in their archaic form on its cover, was reprinted to satisfy readers' demands. This allowed Guo Moruo an opportunity to make corrections and to adopt the more up-to-date horizontal printing. For this new edition, the artist Wei Tianlin (1898–1977) designed a cover that presents a mermaidlike nude, drawn in sure but soft lines, seated before a globe being traversed by a steamboat (fig. 4). The second issue of the quarterly did not sport the same cover, but contained highly abstract decorative graphics by Tao Jingsun (1897–1952), a member of the society. In his editorial commentary, Guo Moruo explained why the journal did not follow the example of other contemporary publications in reprinting famous artworks as attractions. To include famous artworks as decoration, he remarked, was like a peasant girl wearing a golden hairpin borrowed from a wealthy lady; he preferred to forego such ornamentation and to enjoy "the thorn as a hairpin and coarse clothes."<sup>43</sup>

The revamped *Short Story Magazine*, meanwhile, followed the fashion of reproducing high-brow artworks, especially paintings by nineteenth-century and contemporary European and American masters. From the beginning of 1921 to December 1923, the magazine reproduced paintings by Edgar Degas, Jean-François Millet, Édouard Manet, Paul Gauguin, Gino Severini, Mary Cassatt, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and many others. The mini-gallery between the covers of *Short Story Magazine* was intended to contribute to the New Culture Movement,



4 Cover of *Creation*, October 1922, with illustration by Wei Tianlin.

with the chosen artwork expressing a decidedly cosmopolitan outlook. In contrast, publications by the Creation Society would seek a visual effect that conveyed a stark aesthetic and raw creativity. In July 1923, Guo Moruo put a drawing of his own as the heading of the short-lived *Creation Daily*, an image in the style of a woodblock print that suggested a flash of lightning across a vast expanse of darkness.<sup>44</sup>

By this point, Tian Han had distanced himself from the Creation Society because of ill feelings between himself and Cheng Fangwu, who, together with Guo Moruo and Yu Dafu, had started the ambitious *Creation Weekly* in May 1923. In announcing the new publication, they referred to probably the best-known Western artist in China at that time: "Painter Millet never had a Sunday, / We will not have a Sunday either. / For we have no idol to worship, / And we will endeavor to create."<sup>45</sup> Tian Han would contribute an essay titled "Art and Society" to the new weekly, but he was more interested in his own semimonthly, *Southern Country*, which claimed as its mission the "socialization of art" and the "artification of society." *Creation Weekly* was an instant success among young readers in Shanghai. Soon after it began appearing, Zheng Boqi would later recall, a large crowd of students would wait outside the press every Saturday afternoon for the latest issue.<sup>46</sup> In comparison, the concurrent *Literature Weekly* of the Literary Research Association lost much of its appeal, even though the association had ceased publication of its more established *Literature Trimonthly* and adopted the weekly format in an effort to compete with the Creation Society.

Young readers were attracted to *Creation Weekly* for its provocative writing on fundamental questions concerning art and literature. Upholding a deeply romantic vision of a truthful

and artistic life, Guo Moruo and fellow Creators tapped the restless energy of a young generation continually jolted by the aftershocks of the May Fourth Movement. Essential to the success of the weekly, as Guo Moruo well recognized, was "provocation" aimed at a youthful demographic and mentality.<sup>47</sup> His selected translations of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, serialized in over half of the journal's fifty-two issues, sent a clear signal that the May Fourth spirit of skepticism and iconoclasm was still alive. Over a decade later, when a group of young woodcut artists articulated their conception of art, as we will see, they would still find inspiration in the articles published by Guo Moruo in the pages of *Creation Weekly*.

Central to the Creators' writings on art and literature was an exaltation of uninhibited emotion and earnest self-expression. "Literature is a creation that directly appeals to our emotion, rather than stimulating our intellect," stated Cheng Fangwu in the first issue of *Creation Weekly*.<sup>48</sup> He would further define the mission of the new literature as a threefold commitment—to the historical epoch, to a national language, and to literature itself. "Our epoch has imposed too heavy a tax on our intellect and will . . . and we thirst for a literature of beauty that will nourish our more refined emotion and give our lives a thorough cleansing."<sup>49</sup> The *raison d'être* of art and literature, he wrote, especially of the new literary movement, was an omniscient and truthful self. "The difference between true realism and trivialism is simply that one is *expression*, and the other is *representation*. Representation allows no creation, whereas expression opens up a vast space, giving free rein to geniuses."<sup>50</sup> Trivialism, Cheng Fangwu continued, would lead to naturalistic "photographs and phonographs" and was inferior to a realism invested with an expressive subjectivity because the latter brought its audience closer to truth, to the "inner life" of reality.

This endorsement of an expressive art colored Cheng Fangwu's review of an art show organized by the Oriental Art Research Society in May 1923. The exhibition of recent works by society members, Cheng Fangwu noted with delight, revealed "a refreshing and vigorous desire to express oneself" among young artists. By "expression," he meant the suggestion of an inner meaning or depth beyond verisimilitude. Cheng Fangwu noted that he enjoyed the romantic landscapes in oils by Xu Xingzhi (1904–1991), but was particularly encouraged by Wu Renwen's two paintings, because they were "the only works that represent modern life, and show a *Moderne Tendenz*."<sup>51</sup> In this last comment, the verb *biaoxian* (translated as "represent" here) suggests a more truthful form of representation, anticipating the radical shift from "expressing oneself" to "representing an epoch" that was to take place in Cheng's writings.

Guo Moruo, too, would endorse emotion and self-expression as the ultimate justification of artistic and literary creations. Of all the recent movements in Europe, he would single out German expressionism as the most authentic and promising. (The earliest Chinese writing on expressionism, according to Mayching Kao, was an essay published in *Eastern Miscellany* in 1912.<sup>52</sup>) Literature and art in the nineteenth century were essentially "passive," Guo Moruo claimed, because the "naturalism, realism, symbolism, impressionism, even futurism that arose of late—they are all imitative." The twentieth century would be a time for art to be liberated from science and nature. Reversing a well-known saying by Leonardo da Vinci,

Guo Moruo proclaimed that "an artist should not be the grandson of nature, not even her son, but should become the father of nature."<sup>53</sup> He then went on to suggest that "all truly revolutionary movements are artistic movements, all passionate practitioners are genuine artists, and all passionate artists are therefore genuine revolutionaries." Yet the revolution that excited Guo at this moment derived from a humanist affirmation of universal freedom, progress, and jubilation. Artistic and literary movements in the twentieth century, in his view, all aimed at "beautifying human society," which was the goal of all the great revolutionary movements in the world. "We are revolutionaries and artists at the same time. . . . Let's unfurl the banner of beautification and march toward freedom!"<sup>54</sup>

Guo Moruo would indeed rally for such a march in a manifesto that he composed in October 1923 for the All-China Federation of Artists, an organization formed by members of the Creation Society and the Oriental Art Research Society. Addressing young artists who loved peace and freedom, the manifesto outlined the following historical missions: to study and rediscover the native heritage, to introduce contemporary art from Western nations, and to return artistic experience to the common people.<sup>55</sup>

Guo Moruo's relationship with the contemporary art field went beyond scintillating statements. In December 1923, he was invited by Liu Haisu to give a lecture at the Shanghai Meizhuan. The effervescent poet of *Goddesses* fame explained to students and faculty that "impression" and "expression" were two divergent paths in artistic creation. "Truth-seeking in an artist is far more than being truthful to nature, and can only be achieved by being truthful to oneself. . . . Art is an expression of the self, the expression of an irresistible impulse within the artist."<sup>56</sup> Soon after the event, *Creation Weekly* published drawings of nude models by Liu Haisu. In the following months, exercises by Ni Yide (1901–1970), Guan Liang (1900–1986), and Lu Shaofei (1903–1995), all graduates of the Shanghai Meizhuan, appeared in the weekly publication.

Ironically, the dominance of the Shanghai Meizhuan over the art field was not unlike that of the Literary Research Association over the field of literature. One method Liu Haisu used to augment the prestige of his school was to invite literary, intellectual, and social luminaries to deliver lectures there. Through the mid-1920s, guest speakers at the Shanghai Meizhuan included Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Chen Duxiu, Ouyang Yuqian, and Hu Shi. Even though Guo Moruo accused the Literary Research Association of behaving like a domineering "literature lord," he would maintain a close friendship with Liu Haisu, who was at once condemned as a sacrilegious "rebel against art" by cultural conservatives and denounced as an overbearing "school lord" by fellow new-style artists and art educators. Guo's association with the Shanghai Meizhuan would grow, too. In the summer of 1925, he revisited the school and gave a talk on the upcoming international class struggle. A student group at the Shanghai Meizhuan had recently produced his historical play *Nie Ying* and donated all the proceeds to support workers on strike in the wake of the historic May Thirtieth Incident.

*Creation Weekly* was discontinued in May 1924, ending the first phase of the Creation Society. The mighty triumvirate of Guo Moruo, Cheng Fangwu, and Yu Dafu had broken



down, although each in his own way had made a turn to the political left. The fast-changing sociopolitical landscape, in particular the rising anti-imperialist movement across China, excited the romantic and rebellious Creators with a new course of action. In bidding farewell to readers of the weekly, Cheng Fangwu predicted that "our literary revolution, just like our political revolution, must start all over once again."<sup>57</sup> He invited them to listen for the magnificent drum beats of a triumphantly returning army, probably within the year.

### IN THE WHIRLPOOL OF REVOLUTION

The metamorphosis of the Creation Society reached a new stage when a younger group of members started a weekly called *Deluge* in August 1924. This "Satanic project," as the editor of the new venture put it, was to conduct a thorough cleansing before the creation of the beautiful and the good was undertaken.<sup>58</sup> After one issue, however, the weekly had to stop because of massive battles between warlords in the vicinity of Shanghai. (The fighting also prevented the All-China Federation of Artists' *Joint Exhibition by Artists of the Nation*, an ambitious presentation organized by Zhou Qin hao, from taking place.) In September 1925, *Deluge* resumed publication as a semimonthly and aimed much of its furious torrent against the contemporary intellectual and cultural field (fig. 5).<sup>59</sup> Among the noticeable features of the new *Deluge* were the distinct graphic designs and illustrations by the young artist Ye Lingfeng (1904–1975), which readily reminded readers of the stylized, exotic, and melancholic drawings by the fin-de-siècle British illustrator Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898). Ni Yide was also a frequent contributor to the journal, publishing not only fiction but also a series of introductory articles on cubism and modern art in general.

The prediction made by Cheng Fangwu in May 1924—that the literary revolution would have to take place one more time—had not yet come true, and the path leading to this new revolution took a significant detour. The main historic event that evoked calls for a new literary revolution was the Northern Expedition, which, supported by a politically united front between the Nationalists and the Communists, originated in Guangdong in July 1926. Its goal being to vanquish local warlords and achieve national unity, the Northern Expedition was launched amid a rising anti-imperialist sentiment. "The ultimate causes for all the hardship suffered by the Chinese people," stated the manifesto of the National Revolutionary Army, lay in "the imperialist aggressions and the atrocities committed by treacherous warlords, who serve as instruments of the imperialists."<sup>60</sup> The incident that galvanized the nation in the new round of mobilization took place in Shanghai on May 30, 1925, when a large crowd of demonstrators on Nanjing Road protesting the killing of a Chinese textile worker by Japanese armed guards were fired upon by Sikh police under British command. The death of eleven demonstrators set off an angry tidal wave of anti-imperialist protests by workers, students, merchants, and citizens across Shanghai and beyond. A new nationalist political



5 Cover of *Deluge*, September 1925, with illustration by Ye Lingfeng and calligraphy by Guo Moruo.

culture was born, hastening the creation of the National Revolutionary Army and its subsequent military action across south and central China.

Guo Moruo, who had declared himself a devout disciple of Marxism after reading the introductory works of Kawakami Hajime (1879–1946), was at the scene of the May Thirtieth Incident and witnessed its bloody aftermath. Shen Yanbing, too, was among a group of student demonstrators on Nanjing Road that day. (Shen had joined a Communist group in Shanghai in May 1921 and was one of the earliest members of the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] when it was formed two months later.) When news of the killing reached the inland city of Changsha, where Tian Han had been since the previous fall, he decided to return to Shanghai. By the summer of 1925, Guo Moruo and Tian Han were once again in the same bustling city, but would interact with different circles. Owing to his earlier ties to the Young China Association, Tian Han began editing a supplement for *Awakened Lion Weekly*, organ of the ultranationalist Awakened Lion Society. He also assumed teaching positions at Daxia University and Shanghai University.

In the meantime, Guo Moruo's translations of Kawakami Hajime's *Social Organization and Social Revolution* and the novel *Virgin Lands* by Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883) were published by the Commercial Press. That the prestigious press would now issue his translations one after another was a sure sign of Guo's established reputation. He was also involved in the resurrection of *Deluge*, for which he sought contributions from Jiang Guangci (1901–1931), the passionate poet who had appointed himself, at the beginning of 1925, "the singer of the East Asian Revolution" in a collection of poems called *New Dreams*. (Composed during a three-year stay in Moscow, this widely read volume of new-style poetry enthusiastically cel-

celebrated a new vision of human history inspired by the October Revolution.<sup>61</sup> Jiang had also published, on New Year's Day 1925, an essay titled "Modern Chinese Society and Revolutionary Literature" in the *Republican Daily News*.) In his own writings for *Deluge*, Guo Moruo applied his newly acquired understanding of historical materialism and wholeheartedly argued for a general social revolution.

Also excited by the idea of a revolutionary literature, Shen Yanbing wrote a substantive essay discussing its history and implications. Serialized in *Literature Weekly* in May and October 1925, "On Proletarian Art" was among the very first critical endeavors to examine the topic systematically and remains, as Marián Gálik has long suggested, Shen's most important contribution to the theory of proletarian art.<sup>62</sup> In five parts, Shen traced the history of the new literature, describing the condition for its birth and creation and going on to expound on its nature, content, and form. He argued that proletarian art differed from the "people's art" advocated by the Nobel Laureate Romain Roland (1866–1944), in that the former resolutely identified with the working class and its political aspirations. It also differed from so-called peasant art because the latter often failed to go beyond depicting the life and suffering of the rural population. He singled out Maxim Gorky (1868–1936) as the only writer able to represent the proletariat and express its subjectivity. Drawing on theoretical work from the Soviet Union, Shen cautioned against reducing proletarian literature and art to "stimulation and agitation" and posited a new art in tandem with a rich and diverse new life. Yet in spite of its theoretical scope and sophistication, his essay did not have much of a direct impact, in part because the issues raised were largely ahead of their time.<sup>63</sup>

The central concern in the wake of the May Thirtieth Movement was an anti-imperialist and antiwarlord military campaign from the south. In February 1926, Guo Moruo was invited to head the humanities division at Guangdong University in Guangzhou. The southern port-city had been dubbed the "birthplace of revolution" since a new national coalition government had been established there on July 1, 1925. For Guo, the south was now "the only place on which we could rest our hope."<sup>64</sup> Shen Yanbing had arrived in the hopeful city of Guangzhou from Shanghai at the beginning of 1926. A Communist delegate, he had begun serving as a secretary in the propaganda department of the Nationalist Party Central, the interim director of the department being Mao Zedong (1883–1976).<sup>65</sup> When Guo arrived in late March, however, Shen Yanbing had already left in a hurry because it was becoming ominously clear that Chiang Kai-shek was preparing to purge the Nationalist Party of its Communist members. Guo's two traveling companions were Yu Dafu and Wang Duqing (1898–1940), the latter a romantic poet who had studied art in France and joined the Creation Society upon his return. Before leaving Shanghai, they had seen the first issue of *Creation Monthly*, a new journal meant to help, in Yu Dafu's words, "push forward the reform of the current irrational social organization."<sup>66</sup> Arriving in Guangzhou, Guo and his colleagues found Cheng Fangwu waiting at the port, and the three giant Creators were reunited. The reunion, however, was a momentary affair, for the quickening of political life would soon dispatch these old friends to different destinations.

The first lengthy article that Guo Moruo published in those heady Guangzhou days was titled "Revolution and Literature." It appeared in the May 1926 issue of *Creation Monthly*. Guo's main thesis was that "a genuine literature is forever the revolutionary vanguard, and during a revolutionary period there will always be a literary golden age." In the worldwide proletarian revolution against internationalized capitalism, he argued, "individualist liberalism" was outdated, and so was "romantic literature and art." Furthermore, any aspiring writer should understand that "the literature we demand is a socialist, realist literature that concurs with the proletariat, and our demand is already in harmony with the demand of the world."<sup>67</sup> Indirectly answering Cheng Fangwu's prophecy of a renewed literary revolution, Guo Moruo declared the arrival of an age of revolutionary literature in which a writer should first become a foot soldier and dive into the whirlpool of revolution.

The same issue of *Creation Monthly* also published an article titled "The Death of Individualist Art," in which the author, He Wei (1896–1968), a student of law and philosophy in Japan since 1916, described a fundamental contradiction between the capitalist mode of mass production and the myth of artistic creativity sanctified since the European Renaissance. Under the sway of capitalism, he argued, art had undergone compartmentalization and professionalization, leading to a profound "anxiety of creation" that had caused "modern art to yield art theories but no works of art." "When futurism and Dadaism came around, modern art finally gave in to this anxiety and went on the verge of madness."<sup>68</sup> He Wei warned that the logical conclusion of such a demented pursuit for originality was suicide. At the end of the essay, he promised a sequel, "The Revival of Collectivist Art," but it never appeared in the journal.

The whirlpool of revolution that Guo Moruo urged young writers to embrace would soon rise and overwhelm the proponent of revolutionary literature himself. At the end of July 1926, clad in military uniform, Guo marched out of Guangzhou as director of the propaganda section of the general political department of the National Revolutionary Army. (Incidentally, the Commercial Press in Shanghai released Guo Moruo's translation of *Lectures on Western Art History* by Yashiro Yukio [1890–1975] the same month, making available one of the earliest Chinese books on this subject.) Guo's journey would eventually bring him, on a stormy September night in 1927, back to Guangdong a hunted fugitive and bitter enemy of Chiang Kai-shek, commander-in-chief of the National Revolutionary Army. "To me, the period of the Northern Expedition meant merely moving from Guangzhou to Guangzhou," Guo would later wryly comment.<sup>69</sup> This understatement masks the intensity of the fourteen months Guo was away, which were filled with rallies, battles, sadness over fallen comrades, jubilation over victories, agitation and confusion, intrigues and betrayals, and many secret and frantic trips between cities and military posts along the Yangtze River. (During this tempestuous period, Guo Moruo and Shen Yanbing were fighting for the same leftist cause, although their paths never crossed. By August 1927, when Shen snuck from Wuhan back to Shanghai, he was also on the most-wanted list of the Nationalist government. He went into hiding and turned to fiction writing as a way to sort out his confusion and disillusionment.<sup>70</sup>



He would soon reinvent himself as a novelist with the pen name Mao Dun, a homonym of "contradiction.")

While serving as propaganda chief, Guo Moruo on one occasion found himself holding a bullhorn and repeating the words of Chiang Kai-shek, who was making a speech in the recently conquered city of Nanchang on the second anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's passing. Guo later recalled that, halfway through, he realized that Chiang's speech was filled with anti-Communist agitation; increasingly offended, he had the urge to knock Chiang off the platform with the bullhorn but, given the circumstances, had no choice but to finish serving as his mouthpiece.<sup>71</sup> It certainly was an extraordinary situation for the onetime Creator, who only a few years before had held dear the creed of self-expression: "All I wish to be is a newborn that cries when hungry or cold, because every single cry of the newborn is from his heart, unlike a phonograph that relays others' high pitch."<sup>72</sup>

While Guo Moruo grew disillusioned with Chiang Kai-shek and joined the Communist Party during a military retreat, Tian Han stayed in Shanghai to pursue his idea of an art movement. He had declined Guo's invitation to go to the south, and instead formed the Southern Film and Drama Society in April 1926. One of his first projects was to begin work on a film called *Go among the People*. In the fall, the society sponsored a screening of the classic 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin* by Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948), bringing a Soviet film to a Chinese audience for the first time. Not as directly involved in political maneuverings as Guo was, Tian Han, like many contemporaries, was confused by the competing revolutionary slogans bandied about by various factions. For a while, he even stood on the opposite side from Guo.

In May 1927, barely a month after the bloody anti-Communist purge in Shanghai, Tian Han arrived in Nanjing to become an advisor in the general political department of the Nationalist government. He was put in charge of film and drama productions. Three years later, Tian Han would recall this moment in his well-known essay "Our Self-Critique," attributing his decision first to confusion over the true nature of Chiang Kai-shek's Nanjing government and then to a naive belief in art's autonomy from politics. He was still hoping to finish the film *Go among the People*, now with government funding.<sup>73</sup> Upon assuming the advisory position, Tian Han decided to make a trilogy in film about the recent national revolution. He also decided to make a trip to Japan in search of a cameraman. His visit would be his first since his return to China in 1922, and the official title he now carried was Director of the Film Unit and Advisor to the Art Section, Propaganda Office, General Political Department.

Tian Han's quick tour of Tokyo in June 1927 was a remarkable event not only in his own career, but also in the history of modern Sino-Japanese literary exchanges. No other modern Chinese man or woman of letters would have the charm and distinction to attract and meet more than thirty noteworthy contemporary Japanese writers in a single day.<sup>74</sup> Warmly received in Kobe by Tanizaki Junichirō, Tian Han went to Tokyo by train and was greeted at the station by a delegation headed by Satomura Kinzō (1902–1945), a journalist from *Literary Front* whom Tian Han had met in Shanghai two months before. On their way out,

they found Muramatsu Shōfū (1889–1961) and Satō Haruo (1892–1964) waiting, two mainstream writers who otherwise would have had little to do with Satomura or the left-wing *Literary Front*. At the Tsukiji Theater the next day, Tian Han met more noted writers and critics, and was particularly delighted to see the veteran writer Akita Ujaku (1883–1962) again.

In the following days, Tian Han visited more theaters and attended at least two receptions. The playwright Kikuchi Kan (1888–1948), several of whose plays Tian Han had translated into Chinese, hosted one of these receptions, attended by distinguished guests including the future Nobel Laureate Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972) and the noted New Sensationist writer Yokomitsu Riichi (1898–1947), who had yet to write his novel *Shanghai* to offer his take on the May Thirtieth Incident. The other reception was organized by Yamamoto Sanehiko (1885–1952), publisher of the influential intellectual journal *Reconstruction*, which a year before had published a play by Tian Han in a special issue on China.<sup>75</sup> One conversation that stuck in Tian Han's mind was his heated exchange with Sasaki Takamaru (1898–?), director of the Avant-Garde Theater and translator of "The Internationale" into Japanese. The debate was over Tian Han joining the Nanjing government. Sasaki observed that under the Nanjing regime, which had already showed its readiness to suppress any meaningful opposition, it would be impossible to have a genuine art movement. The rhetoric of artistic autonomy, he further warned, missed the true meaning of art.<sup>76</sup> Muramatsu Shōfū, too, had questioned why Tian Han's friends Yu Dafu and Guo Moruo had chosen different paths.<sup>77</sup>

By early July, Tian Han was back in Shanghai and found much to sort out about the volatile political situation. A few weeks later, the two rival Nationalist governments, one in Nanjing and the other in Wuhan, joined forces in reaction to a military revolt by the Communists. In front of his incredulous eyes, Tian Han later noted, those who had recently posted "Down with the Wuhan government" signs were now busily splashing "Cooperation between Nanjing and Wuhan guarantees the survival of our Party" up and down.<sup>78</sup> Amid such dizzying convulsions, a frustrated Tian Han resigned from his official post and returned to Shanghai later in August. Almost immediately, he was invited to head the literature program at the recently reformed Shanghai Art College. On September 1, an ad for the Shanghai Art College appeared in *Shun Pao*, with Tian Han as one of the signatories.

The Shanghai Art College had been created in 1924 by a merger between the Shanghai Art Teachers' College and the Oriental Art Institute (which itself had evolved from the Oriental Art Research Society). The president of the Shanghai Art College was Zhou Qin hao, whose artistic talent was never as astute as his mercenary instincts. (An oil painting of his that was exhibited at the 1923 Oriental Art Research Society show, for instance, had failed to impress the reviewer Cheng Fangwu.) As a result, the school he headed was widely regarded as an illegitimate, profiteering "wild-chicken school," and Zhou Qin hao seemed resigned to the fact that it would never achieve the same enviable status of his brother-in-law Liu Haisu's enterprise, the Shanghai Meizhuan.

When Tian Han joined its faculty at the beginning of the fall semester in 1927, the Shanghai Art College was once again mired in financial woes. Soon after school started, the reform

efforts stalled, and a debt-laden Zhou Qin hao abandoned the business altogether. Following the example of the now-closed Shanghai University, which had pursued a democratic ideal of self-management,<sup>79</sup> students at the Shanghai Art College elected the popular Tian Han as president. From his Nanjing experience, Tian Han had learned that a successful art movement must train a core group of dedicated artists, and that it must generate popular support and maintain independence from manipulative external forces. His new position at the Shanghai Art College made him further recognize the necessity of connecting various departments of art. He believed that "literature, painting, music, drama, and film should form a unified battlefield of art."<sup>80</sup> Believing the Shanghai Art College to be a good place to experiment with his vision for a comprehensive art movement, Tian Han brought much hope and energy to the school. He would later take pride in being labeled the "president of a wild-chicken school" by students of the more prestigious Guanghai University.<sup>81</sup>

Tian Han's vision for an independent art movement differed significantly from Lin Fengmian's ideas concerning an effective campaign for art. Throughout the fall of 1927, while the former dean of the Beijing National Art College was composing his open letter to the field of the nation to plead for unity and government support, Tian Han turned the Shanghai Art College into a center for independent art and artists. His focus was on modern drama, but he also joined the students in scripting and directing a film.<sup>82</sup> He sponsored a series of informal meetings, attended by well-known artists, poets, and dramatists such as Xu Beihong, Yu Dafu, Ouyang Quyan, the poet Xu Zhimo (1897–1931), and the dramatist Hong Shen (1894–1955). Before the semester ended in December, an art exhibition was held to showcase students' work. Following the exhibition, Tian Han organized a week-long program called the Fish and Dragon Art Festival, during which plays by Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian, and Kikuchi Kan were jointly produced by faculty and students. As the financial condition of the college did not improve, Tian Han, Xu Beihong, and Ouyang Yuqian decided to create an art institute of their own. They renamed the Southern Film and Drama Society the Southern Society (its French title given by Xu Beihong as *Cercle Artistique du Midi*) and defined the newly renamed society's first project as the creation of the Southern Art Institute, which was to comprise departments of literature, drama, and fine arts.

The Southern Art Institute was formally established in January 1928, but Tian Han was not sure, as he would acknowledge later, what should be the unifying consciousness of the art movement to which the institute wished to contribute. He was clear, however, that the institute ought to keep an independent and oppositional profile: independence from government subsidy and control on the one hand, and from the sway of money on the other. Consciously or not, Tian Han was carrying on the neo-romantic spirit of the early Creation Society, for which artistic autonomy was itself a revolutionary assertion because it empowered artists to express themselves truthfully and imaginatively. Tian Han still believed in the necessity of "a revolutionary movement in art," whereas his former comrades Guo Moruo and Cheng Fangwu had embraced the idea of a revolutionary art, or art as a means of revolution.

Two years later, when he reflected on the destiny of the Southern Art Institute while writing his lengthy article "Our Self-Critique," Tian Han found a collection of articles published in the Japanese intellectual journal *Reconstruction* to be illuminating. The essays, by three "most intelligent critics from modern Japan," explored in a broad historical and cultural context the function and meaning of three prestigious institutions of higher education: the state-funded Tokyo Imperial University, the private but mainstream Keio Gijuku (founded by Fukuzawa Yukichi [1835–1901] in 1858 and expanded into a university in 1890), and another private but populist school, Waseda University. Tian Han was particularly drawn to the analysis of the cultural symbolism associated with Waseda offered by Ōya Sōichi (1900–1970). Created by the statesman Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922) in 1882 as a counterpart to the imposing Tokyo Imperial University on the one hand and the all-too-exclusive Keio Gijuku on the other, Waseda University, according to Ōya, had maintained the profile of a populist and independent institution of higher learning and had made a noticeable impact on journalism in modern Japan. In the literary and cultural fields, "Wasedaism" stood for opposition to the academicism associated with Tokyo Imperial University and to the urban aestheticism espoused by Keio Gijuku. Yet even such an invaluable tradition could not avoid being "Americanized" and incorporated either by the state or financiers. The only space left for creative and independent thinking, according to another essayist, Aono Suekichi (1890–1961), was in small-scale research institutes.<sup>83</sup>

Together, these critical essays helped Tian Han articulate the aspirations of his own Southern Art Institute, even though the institute had long folded by the time he reflected on the situation. The two establishments from which the Southern Art Institute had sought to distinguish itself were the government-sponsored National Art Academy on the one hand, and the private but dominating Shanghai Meizhuan on the other. With much pride, he related a spirited "Western Expedition" that he and more than fifty students undertook in April 1928. Their destination was Hangzhou, where the National Art Academy had just opened, and their purpose was to show solidarity with the protesting students at the academy and to express their contempt for the "bureaucratized artists and the official institution of learning." (Four students from the troubled academy had transferred to the Southern Art Institute at the beginning of April.) During the expedition, students from the institute staged a modern play in Hangzhou and, singing a song that Tian Han improvised on the Russian tune "The Volga Boatmen," rowed tour boats triumphantly across West Lake.<sup>84</sup>

Opposition to the art school headed by Liu Haisu was not as outspoken, however. Insisting that his art institute was created for penniless young people, Tian Han made it clear that art should not be a privilege but a right, and that an art movement should not be an elite but a populist endeavor. Under his leadership, the Southern Art Institute put much emphasis on student self-governance and financial self-reliance. This commitment consequently fostered an open and egalitarian esprit de corps that was notably absent from either the Shanghai Meizhuan or the National Art Academy. Yet the independent Southern Art Institute lasted only one semester, due to both a shortage of funds and unexpected personnel



changes. In spring 1928, Xu Beihong accepted an appointment at the state-run Central University in Nanjing and would eventually relocate to the new capital.<sup>85</sup> Soon after, Ouyang Yuqian also left to head a drama research institute in Guangdong.

In April 1930, Tian Han published his reflections in "Our Self-Critique," in which he offered a frank review of his ideas and practices during the previous decade. Besides explaining his decision to join the Nanjing government in May 1927, he reexamined his own efforts to create and sustain a comprehensive art movement through the Southern Society. His assessment was that "more ardor than insight, more romantic tendencies than reason marked the past activities of the Southern Society. We wished to release the glory of the new classes from under the ground, but we were too heavily wrapped in the fog of petit bourgeois sentimentality and decadence." The primary purpose of this self-criticism, he explained, was to understand contemporary cultural developments in the world and the condition of the revolutionary movement in China; this would then help clarify what kind of art movement Chinese youth should engage in if they wished to contribute to the coming of a new age.<sup>86</sup>

With "Our Self-Critique," Tian Han made a much-publicized left turn in his political orientation and prepared himself for a leading role in the newly formed League of Left-Wing Writers. He bade farewell to an era in his life characterized by the continual endeavor to spearhead a comprehensive art movement. With the passing first of the Southern Art Institute and eventually of the Southern Society itself, the revolutionary movement in art that he and his colleagues envisioned gave way to a movement toward revolutionary art. Abandoned from then on also was the call for an art movement that would cut across different forms and practices; for future movements, "art" would increasingly refer to the visual arts only.<sup>87</sup> Many factors made the left turn a logical choice for Tian Han, who remained deeply indebted to his neo-romantic initiation in Taishō Japan. The most compelling reason for his conversion was the emerging left-wing cultural movement that took the literary and artistic circles in Shanghai by storm at the beginning of 1928. A younger and more energetic Creation Society, along with other leftist groups, helped reconfigure the cultural field by interjecting Marxist theory and sectarian politics.

### TO REPRESENT AN EPOCH

The lead article in the January 1928 issue of *Creation Monthly*, "Heroic Trees," was written by Guo Moruo, who had returned to Shanghai in late 1927 a fugitive hunted by the Nanjing government for his "counterrevolutionary" activities. Under the pen name "Mai Ke Ang," a homonym for "Maker Is Me,"<sup>88</sup> Guo described the common silk-cotton trees in Guangdong and used their seasonal change in color—from red to white—as a metaphor for the distressing political reversal in contemporary China. The bloody white terror was to be resisted, he declared, calling "violent rebels" in the field of literature and art to rise and defend the cause of socialism and the proletarian revolution. Young writers and artists should truth-

fully record, like a phonograph, "the most fierce rumbling from the depths of the earth—*Gonnon* (workers and peasants) and *Baudon* (revolt)." The agitated Guo also asserted that battle lines had been redrawn and new alliances had been formed: "Let us shed the gray garb of sentimentalism, and with dignity and pride march onto the field of theoretical struggle."<sup>89</sup>

An uncompromising "theoretical struggle" was indeed what the resurrected Creation Society had been preparing itself for. In the fall of 1927, Cheng Fangwu arrived in Japan in an effort to recruit new members for the society, which had recently suffered a severe blow when Yu Dafu voiced his bitter disappointment and openly withdrew his membership.<sup>90</sup> Triggered by financial issues and personality conflicts, Yu Dafu's departure also reflected a growing political divergence between himself and other members. It further mirrored the sectarian splitting and infighting within the left-wing cultural movement in Japan. The Japan Proletariat Literature and Art Federation, formed in September 1925, was the first major and inclusive left-wing organization, with *Literary Front* as its official publication. A key editor of *Literary Front* was Komaki Ōmi (1894–1978), a student of French literature who in early 1921 had created the journal *Seed Sower* and set the left-wing socialist literary movement in motion in Taishō Japan. When Komaki and his comrades started *Literary Front* in 1924, with *La Fronto* as its title in Esperanto, they continued endorsing a world revolution and committed themselves to "the common front of artistic struggle in the liberation of the proletariat."<sup>91</sup> In June 1927, however, *Literary Front* published two manifestos, one by the Japan Proletariat Art Federation and the other by a newer organization named the Japan Proletarian School of Literature and Art Federation, thus publicizing the breakup of the Japan Proletariat Literature and Art Federation.

The same issue of *Literary Front* also had a major Chinese component. Merely two months before, Komaki and Satomura Kinzō had arrived in Shanghai as representatives of the journal, in order to assess the impact of the recent anti-Communist coup and to get in touch with proletarian writers in China. Among the people they met were Yu Dafu and Tian Han.<sup>92</sup> The journalists' travelogue appeared in the June 1927 issue, and accompanying their report was calligraphy by Tian Han proclaiming "Proletarian writers of the world, unite!" Yu Dafu's contribution to the journal was an article in Japanese, in which he denounced Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal of the national revolution. The journal also reprinted an open letter by Chinese writers addressing the "British intellectual class and general public." The letter had first appeared in *Deluge* in April and was signed by members of the Creation Society as well as Lu Xun. By early June, copies of this hefty issue of *Literary Front* were available in select bookstores in Shanghai.<sup>93</sup>

The realignments within the Japanese left-wing cultural movement in spring 1927 owed much to the coming of age of a younger generation of theorists and critics under the influence of Fukumoto Kazuo (1894–1983), a radical Marxist theorist dominating the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) from 1925 to 1927. Accusing a former JCP leader of following a self-defeating policy of compromise with social democrats, Fukumoto advocated a purification of beliefs among party members and defined the present struggle as belonging primarily to the

realm of theory. He urged genuine Marxists to part with "fellow travelers" (i.e., "phony" communists) and social democrats. Embracing the Fukumotoist doctrine, young theorists successfully forced more established members, such as Aono Suekichi, Hayashi Fusao (1903–1975), and Kurahara Korehito (1902–?), to resign from the Japan Proletariat Literature and Art Federation.<sup>94</sup> In June 1927, those who left the federation, including both Komaki Ōmi and Satomura Kinzō, formed the Alliance of the Worker and Peasant Artists. An editorial in the July issue of *Literary Front* celebrated the new organization as the "true subject" of the proletarian art movement. In a stern statement, the alliance criticized members of the Japan Proletariat Literature and Art Federation for their infantilism and doctrinairism, asserting that their seemingly radical conception of art was in fact bourgeois in nature.<sup>95</sup> Theoretical as well as organizational divisions within the left-wing cultural movement had now fully surfaced, and their adverse effects would soon be felt in China. On New Year's Day 1928, *Literary Front* published a major article by Aono Suekichi on the various sectarian divides that had plagued the proletarian literature and art movement in Japan. By then, the Alliance of the Worker and Peasant Artists had itself undergone a split, with Kurahara Korehito and others forming yet another organization, the Alliance of Avant-Garde Artists.<sup>96</sup>

Although Fukumotoism had been denounced by the Comintern and rejected by *Literary Front* as a naive "romantic leftism," when Cheng Fangwu arrived in Tokyo he found a group of Chinese students much inspired by the idea of a theoretical struggle. Some of them had been members of a society for the study of socialist literature and art and a reading group of Marxist art theory at the Tokyo Imperial University, two student organizations subscribing to the Fukumotoist agenda of intellectual reinforcement and discipline. At Cheng's invitation, five young Marxists (all but one of whom had received their diplomas) returned to Shanghai toward the end of 1927 as the newest members of the Creation Society and were immediately engaged in action. They issued a second edition of the latest *Creation Monthly* in which they included an urgent notice about the forthcoming *Cultural Critique*, a sister magazine to the existing monthly. The new journal, they wrote, would be "the poignant expression of a group of young students who believe in truth and refuse to keep silent in a dark age haunted by ghosts." Confident that the new publication would "introduce a new epoch," its editors hoped that "awakened young comrades, home and abroad, [would] support in unison this new vital force in the intellectual field."<sup>97</sup>

This new force also asserted itself aggressively by preventing the formation of a united front between the Creation Society and some prominent figures in the literary field. The original edition of the January 1928 issue of *Creation Monthly* had announced the revival of *Creation Weekly*, with a reference to Cheng Fangwu's promise, made in May 1924, of a triumphant return. One purpose of bringing back the weekly was to forge a broader alliance of left-wing writers in the changed political environment under the new right-wing Nanjing regime. Zheng Boqi, a veteran member of the Creation Society, had contacted the poet Jiang Guangci, and together they had visited Lu Xun in late 1927 to discuss a joint effort. Having signed his name on the open letter drafted by the Creation Society in early spring,



靈魂的叫喊 迅雷作

6 Xu Xunlei, *The Outcry of the Soul*, 1928, woodcut.

Lu Xun readily accepted their invitation and suggested resurrecting *Creation Weekly* as a first step.<sup>98</sup> The advance notice on the weekly therefore listed Lu Xun and Jiang Guangci as among its featured contributors. The young Creators, however, scratched the plan, not only because they wanted to have an absolutely new start, but also because they saw in Lu Xun not an ally or fellow traveler, but a target of their critique instead.

Before *Cultural Critique* made its debut, a journal called *Sun Monthly* appeared in some bookstores in Shanghai. Inside its conspicuous cover depicting a red sun radiating strong beams of light, the inaugural issue contained fiction, poetry, literary criticism, a translation, and two highly expressive drawings by the artist Xu Xunlei (?–1931) (fig. 6). These two stark, romantic images, like the journal's central logo featuring a naked couple reclining against a rising sun, had the effect of a crude black-and-white print made from a woodblock. A defiant, cosmopolitan spirit was palpable in both the journal's visuals and Jiang Guangci's poetic declaration on the first page: "Should we be courageous, we will illuminate the universe like the sun. For the sun is our hope and our emblem."<sup>99</sup> The lead article, "Modern Chinese Literature and Social Life," was also written by Jiang Guangci. Starting with the thesis that "literature must represent social life," the effusive poet urged committed writers to live up to the revolutionary times. "We are not aesthetes given to daydreaming, fancying that art transcends social life, or that artistic creation is not determined by the epoch, or that an artistic mind is free, superhuman, mysterious, or that artwork is mere self-expression."<sup>100</sup> Jiang criticized contemporary literature for failing to represent the ongoing revolution and encouraged artists and writers to take part in social transformation and to exalt in their work the many worthy heroes who were fighting for a bright future.



The Sun Society, which launched the new monthly, was a group of young writers and poets who had become members of the Communist Party during the Northern Expedition period. Jiang Guangci and the literary critic Qian Xingcun (1900–1977) were the group's key organizers. In the first half of 1928, the society would join forces with the reenergized Creation Society in advocating a revolutionary literature, although there was also much sectarian squabbling between these two avowedly leftist groups. Their chorus for a literature serving the cause of social revolution in fact echoed the political line determined by the Comintern and adopted by the CCP at the time. Stunned by the bloody anti-Communist purge, the battered CCP had rejected secretary general Chen Duxiu's policy of compromise with the Nationalist Party and sought to accelerate a social revolution as part of the global confrontation between capital and the proletariat. The strategy was to duplicate the Soviet model by focusing on urban centers. From 1928 to 1932, the CCP would focus on organizing boycotts, demonstrations, strikes, and armed insurrections in cities, especially in the industrialized coastal area. Revolutionary literature as a political movement was therefore a concrete expression of the CCP's policy of "pushing deeper the revolutionary tide" against all odds.

Its political implications aside, the discourse on revolutionary literature revolved around two major theoretical premises. "Literature," in this context, was seldom confined to a single conventional aesthetic practice; rather, it stood for all artistic endeavors. Impassioned elaborations on the nature and possibility of a revolutionary literature would often begin and end with literary sociology, because what its proponents sought to redefine was the social image and function of the committed writer or artist. In this respect, expositions on revolutionary literature were driven by the same need for a historical reconceptualization that had compelled Shen Yanbing in January 1921 to sanctify the modern literary worker as a universal humanist. The explicit political role now assigned to the writer, however, caused as much anxiety as it did excitement, because the truth of the literary or artistic work was relocated from its creator's inner world to a meaningful relationship with history. As Cheng Fangwu would soon make clear, the project of revolutionary literature was nothing other than a conscious transformation, or self-negation, of the subject of the writer. The revolutionary writer/intellectual, this theory proposed, had to free himself of the shackles of a petit bourgeois sensibility and turn to peasants and industrial workers as his true subject.<sup>101</sup>

The other theoretical cornerstone of the discourse on revolutionary literature was the imperative to represent a new historical reality. Rapid and successive changes in contemporary social life, according to Jiang Guangci, had made it impossible for a writer to grasp their meaning and for literature to represent their impact. Brought forth by the recent revolutionary movement were mobilized masses, whose eruption onto the political scene far exceeded the existing realm of literary or artistic representations, and who may therefore have appeared, observed Cheng Fangwu, dirty, crude, and unrepresentable. Yet it was the revolting workers and peasants who had enthralled Guo Moruo with their deep-throated bellowing of "Gonnon" and "Baudon" and revealed to him a sublime spectacle of history in the making. For Guo, as well as for Jiang, a primary task of revolutionary literature was to rep-

resent this unprecedented political force as both collective agent and subject, which would require the committed writer to appreciate the revolutionary workers and peasants and sympathize with their emotion and aspirations. As Jiang Guangci would further expound in a follow-up essay, "revolutionary literature is a literature that takes the oppressed masses as its starting point! The first condition of revolutionary literature is that it is imbued with the spirit of revolting against all old forces!"<sup>102</sup>

This mandate of sympathetic representation underpinned the discourse on revolutionary literature. A partisan literature such as this relied on a dialectical engagement encapsulated in the concept of *biaoxian*, which as a versatile verb had described a central commitment of the early neo-romantic Creation Society. If, for Li Puyuan in 1927, artistic revolution required artists to truthfully express a modern consciousness, for Jiang Guangci and his followers one year later, revolutionary literature and art called for the passionate representation of social life and reality. Governed by the same verb, *biaoxian*, these two objects—subjective consciousness to be expressed and external reality to be represented—now indicated divergent epistemological operations as well as differing artistic commitments.

On January 15, 1928, the first issue of *Cultural Critique* was published, adding momentum to the emerging cultural left wing. The antiestablishment tenor that had characterized the early Creation Society was still loud and clear, but the theoretical premise supporting this intervention was new: given the failure of the recent political revolution, a cultural revolution was in order. In his congratulatory remarks in the first issue, Cheng Fangwu quoted Lenin's dictum on the necessity of revolutionary theory and set as the journal's task a comprehensive critique of capitalism and imperialism; specifically, *Cultural Critique* would redefine the issues for the social sciences and the fields of art and literature. He proclaimed that a shining beacon had been erected for the revolution, and a magnificent enlightenment had begun.<sup>103</sup>

The scope and substance of *Cultural Critique's* first issue, consisting almost entirely of contributions by the young Creators recruited from Japan, indicated good coordination. Aware of the novelty of their theoretical language, the editors provided a glossary of concepts of philosophy and political economy, most of them accompanied by their German original. Among the first words translated and defined were *Dialektik*, *Aufheben*, *Proletariat*, and *Ideologie*. Thus the latest intellectual enlightenment began with a systematic introduction of the basic tenets of Marxism and historical materialism.

Against the issue's heavily theoretical pieces on philosophy and religion, the article "Art and Social Life" by Feng Naichao (1901–1983) stood out for its direct engagement with Chinese society and literature. Feng, a poet with symbolist inclinations, had published in *Creation Monthly* and *Deluge* since early 1926. Before his return to Shanghai in the fall of 1927, he was a student of art and aesthetics at the Tokyo Imperial University and had participated in the Marxist art theory reading group there. Feng's first analytical essay to be published, "Art and Social Life" is far from polished, and it contains many neologisms and unidiomatic expressions that reflect the author's Japanese education since childhood. Nonetheless, its

polemical thrust was unmistakable, and it set the tone for a frequently acrimonious exchange that would embroil many writers and critics gathered in Shanghai in the following two years.

The title of Feng Naichao's essay came from the well-known Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918), whose broadly influential work *Art and Social Life* had been translated into Japanese by Kurahara Korehito and become available in early 1927. "What should the relationship between art and society be in present China?" was the key question posed by Feng, who also promised to explore how a guiding theory for the field of art might best be developed.<sup>104</sup> For Feng, China was caught in an imminent transition, after capitalism had brought the country ever closer to "the modern countries of civilization," as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had predicted it would. He translated an entire passage from the *Communist Manifesto* and concluded that with the advance of the Northern Expedition into the Yangtze River region, political movement by the masses had become a prominent feature of the Chinese national revolution, even though on the surface the revolution seemed to have failed.

Based on this optimistic assessment of large-scale historical developments, Feng Naichao described the May Fourth period as a bygone age and suggested that the previous literary revolution of the May Fourth era had yielded a body of literature redolent of misgivings harbored by a displaced petite bourgeoisie (including Lu Xun, Yu Dafu, and Guo Moruo), who had unwittingly played the role of melancholy clown. Feng characterized these writers as either pessimistically nonrevolutionary or by nature reactionary, with the exception of Guo, who he felt was redeemed by his romanticism and social protest. In particular, Feng accused Lu Xun of escapism and indulgence in self-pity during a period of social transformation. In Feng's view, Lu Xun, "the old man," enjoyed nothing better than "contentedly surveying, with intoxicated eyes and from the top floor of a murky wine shop, life outside the window."<sup>105</sup> The theoretical impetus behind this rejection of the May Fourth tradition, other than a new historical analysis, was the Fukumotoist demand that all established writers self-consciously change their orientation in an age of imminent revolution. Many years later, Feng would acknowledge that the new Creators as a group were enamored of the "ultra-left dogmatism" of Fukumoto.<sup>106</sup>

On a more constructive note, Feng Naichao proposed an interactive relationship between art and social life in the upcoming revolutionary stage. He chose not to dwell on "the grimy field of art in China," but wished instead to clarify the historical significance of the new art and the function of the new artist. His point of departure was to consider the social grounds of "art for art's sake" and "art for life's sake," two persistent and presumably opposite theories of art that in the final analysis, according to Feng, constituted a false problem. Guarding the ivory tower was an act of self-deception, he wrote, and betrayed, in the words of Plekhanov, "a hopelessly irreconcilable relationship" between the artist and his environment. Feng further quoted Lenin, who had argued that while Leo Tolstoy was a realist in depicting people's sufferings, he nonetheless turned into a religious proselytizer when it came to offering a solution.<sup>107</sup> Genuine gratification for an artist, suggested Feng, could be achieved

only with the elimination of social contradictions. "Great artists do not achieve their greatness because they invent a certain school, but because they stand for a great social personality of their time, which means that with an ardent revolutionary spirit, they cast works that express the *Tempo* of an epoch."<sup>108</sup>

Feng Naichao then cautioned that an argument for the social function of art could become an empty statement if it was not grounded in revolutionary theory and a scientific worldview. Fruitful answers to debates about literature and art would arrive only with an analysis of the relationship between artistic creation and the forever-changing social life.<sup>109</sup> Yet Feng made few concrete suggestions on how to develop a theory of revolutionary art. This task was purposely left to Li Chuli (1900–1994), whose forthcoming essay "How to Construct a Revolutionary Literature," Feng promised, would address practical questions. The previous fall, when Cheng Fangwu was visiting Japan, Li Chuli had given a talk on the same topic, which may have directly inspired Cheng's well-known essay "From the Literary Revolution to a Revolutionary Literature," written in November 1927 and published in the February 1928 issue of *Creation Monthly*.<sup>110</sup> Li's essay followed, in the second issue of *Cultural Critique*, and these two expositions on a revolutionary literature have a great deal in common.

Yet Li Chuli was not any more concrete than Feng Naichao or Cheng Fangwu in his discussion of revolutionary literature, which he regarded as synonymous with proletarian literature. Claiming that proletarian literature in other countries often resorted to satire, exposition, and agitation, he identified the most challenging issue to be the making of the proletarian writer. Li contended that a proletarian writer did not have to come from the proletariat, but the writer should be a revolutionary who brought theory into practice: "He does not simply 'represent social life' from an objective point of view, but transforms 'social life' through his practice. His 'art of a weapon' is simultaneously 'the weapon of art' for the proletariat."<sup>111</sup> A partisan editor was quick to praise Li Chuli for laying the "groundwork for a revolutionary literary theory."<sup>112</sup> His uncompromising, Fukumotoist commitment to a theoretical struggle would also draw spirited responses and rebuttals from his fellow left-wing critics and writers.<sup>113</sup> More important, however, Li Chuli helped crystallize a new conception of political art. The agenda of turning "the art of a weapon" into "the weapon of art," for instance, would be echoed by Wang Duqing, the erratic poet who had by then assumed the role of editor of *Creation Monthly*.

"A magnificent new departure!!!" declared Wang Duqing as he prepared a new issue of *Creation Monthly* in August 1928. By then, *Cultural Critique* had already been banned, even though its last issue in May had carried the innocuous title *Culture*. Between March and June, at least two other semimonthlies associated with the Creation Society during its late period had come and gone. One of them was *Flowing Sand*, dedicated to creating a proletarian literature that would be "Simple and Strong."<sup>114</sup> The short-lived journal published two political posters by Xu Xingzhi, at the time a student of oil painting and theater in Tokyo. The frequency with which left-wing and pro-Communist journals appeared and disappeared



in Shanghai during this period is a telling sign of the volatile and yet porous political environment at the beginning of the Nanjing regime. The literary field was being transformed, reported a contributor to *Creation Monthly*, by the unprecedented number of literary magazines, which in turn had been inspired by the ongoing debate over revolutionary literature.<sup>115</sup>

The redesigned cover of the August issue of *Creation Monthly* was a busy, interlaced image with a vaguely cubist visual idiom and art-deco graphics that meant to evoke a collective presence of workers and peasants. Two issues later, the cover would change into a photo collage, in which a large urban crowd looks up at the statue of a strong, muscular Caucasian male raising a sledgehammer. The search for a new visual language was part of the journal's effort to seek an engaged and combative art. Vowing to bring true liberation to "commodified, enslaved modern art," Wang Duqing also wanted to develop "an art for the liberation of humanity, and a proletarian art."<sup>116</sup> The new departure he proclaimed was no less than a manifesto on the liberation of art.

The time has come. The time has come for us to strive efficiently for the liberation of our art!

Under the present chaotic conditions, the venomous vapor of individualism envelopes our land. Everything is on the verge of suffocating in such air, and our doubly shackled art cannot move one step forward.

We now understand that the function of art is to help society become aware of itself; art must not be the private possession of a minority, and must not be a mirror of the life and sentiment of the privileged few. We understand that if art does not join in the rank of the majority, it will not have any foundation. . . .

The time has come. The time has come for us to liberate ourselves from art! . . .

Confused by the fact that art has always excluded the majority of people, we naturally became slaves of art. Our demand now is to destroy that aspect of art and to subject art to our life rather than our life to art.

Therefore, while we strive for the liberation of art, we must still strive to liberate ourselves from art!<sup>117</sup>

Wang Duqing's call for liberation *of* as well as *from* art was immediately echoed by Feng Naichao, who introduced the next issue of *Creation Monthly* with a brief essay titled "How to Overcome the Crisis in Art." Feng first reaffirmed the need for liberation from the iron shackles of commodification, then rejected calls for a "people's art" or even a "peasant art," seeing in both a covert surrender to bourgeois sensibilities. The solution, he proposed, lay in the creation of a proletarian art. In language reminiscent of the European romanticist tradition, Feng wrote: "Our art is a weapon for class liberation; it is also a concrete legislator and executive of the new life view and the new *Weltanschauung*. The complete success of the revolution demands the completion of our art, which organizes the emotion of the new society."<sup>118</sup>

The use of the more abstract term "art," as opposed to "literature," by Wang Duqing and Feng Naichao was itself part of the new departure. The editorial postscript of the August

issue of *Creation Monthly* addressed the use of this term and explained that "art" here stood for a general cultural movement. "The work of our organization is not limited to literature; other fields such as fine arts, music, and especially drama are all projects we wish to undertake."<sup>119</sup> The editorial collective promised to pay special attention to these areas in future issues. Indeed, the August issue featured an essay by Shen Qiyu (1903–1970) titled "The Meaning of the Drama Movement," and several more articles on drama followed, including Feng Naichao's "The Anguish of the Drama Movement in China." In the December issue, Zhu Jingwo (1901–1941) contributed a translation of a Marxist study of painting by the Russian literary critic Vladimir Friche (1870–1929).

One institutional reason for the growing prominence of a discourse on art in the pages of *Creation Monthly* was that, by the second half of 1928, several members of the Creation Society had become associated with the Shanghai Art College, the private art school that Tian Han had briefly headed in the fall of 1927. When Tian Han had proposed to merge the bankrupt Shanghai Art College with his new Southern Art Institute, the original owner of the college, Zhou Qin hao, and his cohort had fiercely resisted. As a result, a number of students had followed Tian Han to his new school. Zhou Qin hao had promptly announced a "complete reorganization" in an effort to reassert his control. As part of the overhaul, he had resurrected his long-established connections with the Creation Society, inviting many of its members to be on the faculty. He clearly saw their popularity among the restive and discontented young people arriving from the provinces that had been rattled by the Northern Expedition and its aftermath. He had even put Cheng Fangwu and Wang Duqing on a committee supervising the reorganization, he announced.<sup>120</sup> Recognizing Feng Naichao's growing appeal to the young student population, which had much to do with his blunt attack on Lu Xun as well as the publication of his poetic collection *Red Muslin Lantern*, Zhou Qin hao had asked Feng to head a department of social sciences specifically created for him.<sup>121</sup>

In October 1928, *Creation Monthly* carried the essay "The Fundamental Concepts of an Art Movement" to further elaborate on the idea of a proletarian art movement. The essay could be read as a direct response to Lin Fengmian's notion of an art movement, even though there was little sign that it received any attention from members of the Art Movement Society, who had by now comfortably settled by scenic West Lake in Hangzhou. The essay's author was Shen Qiyu, who had also studied in Japan and returned to Shanghai soon after Feng Naichao and others had. He began his essay with an assertion: "Since its concrete inception, the proletarian art movement in China has been progressing for over half a year," its major achievement, he noted, being the establishment of a theoretical foundation.<sup>122</sup> Shen Qiyu admitted that the proletarian masses were not yet readers, nor were there any truly proletarian writers. Nonetheless, capitalism on a global scale had made a proletarian art movement both possible and necessary in semicolonial China, where imperialists had long made inroads with the aid of capital, a nascent national bourgeoisie could no longer defend itself, and the petite bourgeoisie had no chance of survival. Works resulting from the developing proletarian art movement, asserted Shen, would add momentum to social transformation

and win recognition from the revolutionary working class much more readily than would writings by a writer such as Lu Xun.

This last assertion led Shen Qiyu to conclude that the fundamental mission of an art movement was to join forces with the political movement. He argued that only through political participation would the confusion over the dual nature of an art movement—it being at once political and artistic—be clarified, for the confusion itself betrayed a persistent desire to divorce political efficacy from artistic autonomy. Here, Shen remarked that the proletariat could not possibly develop its own art and culture before it gained political power. In the overall political struggle of the proletariat, an art movement would constitute a secondary department. Its goal would be to create an art that would motivate as well as educate the revolutionary masses, an art that would be broadly accessible and enjoyable. The creation of a proletarian art, in the end, would mean “nothing but a legitimate intrusion into art history by the proletariat.”<sup>123</sup>

This “legitimate intrusion” points to a grand, deeply utopian project, one that became conceivable not so much in response to local or national complexities as because of an uplifting vision of global identity and political solidarity. The proletariat, in this vision, was a world-historical agent that embodied as many cosmopolitan and universalist aspirations as the general humanity that liberal humanists such as Lin Fengmian and Shen Yanbing had evoked to justify their respective creative enterprises earlier in the decade. (It is telling that most writers from this period preferred to transliterate the word “proletariat” so as to keep its modern and international associations.) The proletariat was also imagined as the consummate subject, one with which all progressive artists had to identify. The argument that the proletariat should advance into art history and stake a legitimate claim underscored that art was a contested social institution and a vital symbolic realm. The proletariat’s “legitimate intrusion” into art history would therefore mean not merely the proletariat controlling the institution of art, but also the representation of the proletariat in art.

Shen Qiyu’s essay was arguably the most comprehensive discussion of the art movement to be offered by the Creation Society in its last stage of evolution. Before long, Xu Xingzhi, who had returned from Japan, would rise to the occasion and write two further articles defining the task of a new movement in fine arts. The first of his essays would be published in March 1930, the same month in which the League of Left-Wing Writers would hold its first meeting on the campus of the China College of Art in Shanghai.





### 3

## The New Art Movement and Its Field of Vision

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On January 1, 1928, Lu Xun made this terse entry in his diary: "Sunday. Overcast. Uneventful." He was in Shanghai, waiting to see the latest issue of a semi-monthly, *Northern Renaissance*, and probably did not even notice the new *Sun Monthly* or the more established *Creation Monthly*. There were simply too many colorful journals, magazines, pictorials, tabloids, announcements, and manifestos clamoring for attention. Two days later, Lu Xun received a copy of *Northern Renaissance*, which contained the first installment of his translation of *Trends in the History of Modern Art* by Itagaki Takaho (1894–1966).

Translating an art history book was one of several projects Lu Xun had undertaken after arriving in Shanghai on October 3, 1927. Like many of his contemporaries, Lu Xun had come to the city as the Northern Expedition redefined the nation's political geography. He and his common-law wife, Xu Guangping (1898–1968), had fled Guangzhou in late September, as much frightened as disgusted with the rampant anti-Communist violence that terrorized what had so recently been hailed as the "birthplace of revolution." Even before the reign of white terror descended, Lu Xun had felt uneasy about life in Guangzhou. Less than two months into his tenure as professor of the humanities department at Sun Yat-sen University (formerly Guangdong University), he complained privately that he could find no time to read or think in a hectic public life that resembled nothing but a whirlpool.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, the revolutionary fervor that enchanted Guo Moruo, who had held the same academic position until plunging himself into military action, failed to inspire a more skeptical Lu Xun.

Shanghai was a largely strange place to Lu Xun, but he quickly found himself among many old friends and associates. On October 5, even before securing a suitable apartment, he visited the famed Uchiyama Bookstore and made some purchases. Returning to the bookstore eight more times that same month, Lu Xun came to know its owner, Uchiyama Kanzō (1885–1959). Thus began an extraordinary friendship that would be a highlight of the last ten years of Lu Xun's life. Uchiyama was a faithful admirer of Lu Xun, as well as a resourceful



supplier of books; he would also provide Lu Xun and his family with critical assistance on several occasions. In mid-October, Lu Xun paid a visit to Shen Yanbing, who happened to live in the same residential compound as Lu Xun and Xu Guangping. Still a political refugee in hiding, Shen Yanbing had just published, under the pen name Mao Dun, a novella titled *Disillusionment* in *Short Story Magazine*. At the time of the visit, he was assiduously reviewing all of Lu Xun's literary works, and a month later his essay "On Lu Xun" appeared in the same prestigious journal, with a photograph of the writer on its inside cover. Offering by far the most sympathetic appraisal of Lu Xun to date, Shen Yanbing highlighted the veteran writer's commitment to "resisting all forms of oppression and exposing all instances of hypocrisy."<sup>2</sup> The essay would be instrumental in establishing Lu Xun as a representative writer of modern Chinese literature. In April 1928, *The Young Companion*, billing itself in English as "the most attractive and popular magazine in China," published another photograph of Lu Xun and a charcoal sketch of the writer by artist Situ Qiao (1902–1958). The two images were accompanied by an editorial introduction and a brief autobiography, all of which further augmented Lu Xun's status as a literary celebrity.

In spite of his wish to stay out of public view, Lu Xun found it hard to insulate himself from the literary and cultural circles that seemed excited about his coming to Shanghai. From late October through December, he delivered nine speeches at universities such as Fudan, Guanghua, Daxia, and the newly created Labor University. He also gave a lecture at the Lida Academy, where his good friend and graphic designer Tao Yuanqing (1893–1929) was an art teacher. While at the experimental academy, he met Feng Zikai, chair of the Western painting department and an accomplished cartoonist. Meanwhile, the Relief Society of China, recognizing Lu Xun's prominence, contacted him for support and contributions. Delegates from the Creation Society followed, inviting him to write for a soon-to-be-resurrected *Creation Weekly*. In the middle of December, an official letter of appointment, together with a handsome stipend, arrived from the University Council of the Nanjing government. Chancellor Cai Yuanpei had allocated funds to support distinguished freelance writers and scholars, and Lu Xun was one of the first to benefit from this obligation-free fellowship.<sup>3</sup> Also in December, he assumed the editorship of the literary journal *Thread of Words*, which had been shut down in Beijing and relocated to Shanghai.

Lu Xun was ambivalent about all this activity from the beginning. He thought of leaving Shanghai and retreating to the countryside, but he also wished to do some translation in order (as he put it) to earn his keep.<sup>4</sup> One evening in early December 1927, browsing through the Uchiyama Bookstore, he came across a copy of the original Japanese version of *Trends in the History of Modern Art* and purchased it. The next day, he wrote to Li Xiaofeng (1897–1971), manager of the Northern Renaissance Press, and inquired whether he would be interested in publishing a translation of Itagaki's richly illustrated text, which Lu Xun described as "simple, clear, quite impressive," and much needed in China.<sup>5</sup> He suggested that the publisher consider including carefully selected illustrations with each installment of the translation. The response was prompt and enthusiastic, and Lu Xun began work on it right away.

He finished the translation by mid-February 1928, but its serialization in *Northern Renaissance* would last eight more months.

Lu Xun's decision to translate an art history book was far from a whimsical one. The project brought him new intellectual excitement as he settled in an urban, cosmopolitan, and partly colonial environment. It also opened up a new engagement, as he was quickly drawn into debates with the aggressive left wing on the cultural front. The translation renewed Lu Xun's long-lasting interest in the visual arts and prepared for his intervention in the fast-expanding contemporary art field. Working as a journal editor, he came to appreciate the aesthetic appeal of the woodcut and actively promoted the black-and-white print as an expressive, modern medium of art. Through his advocacy, the emerging avant-garde movement in art would identify in the woodblock print an ideal medium and find its own artistic vision deepened as well.

## AN AESTHETIC OF VIGOR

The first salvo of attacks that Feng Naichao fired through the pages of *Cultural Critique* may have caught Lu Xun off guard in February 1928, but it should not have come as a total surprise to the veteran author of *The True Story of Ah Q*. In temperament, Lu Xun had always felt closer to the Literary Research Association than to the confrontational Creation Society. In early 1927, while in Guangzhou, he had seen the potential of working with the Creators and had got in contact with them, even though Cheng Fangwu had already accused him of indulging in the leisurely life of a literati connoisseur.<sup>6</sup> In the wake of the anti-Communist purge, he felt much sympathy for the Creators because they were subjected to the same political repression.<sup>7</sup> He therefore readily accepted, in November 1927, Zheng Boqi's invitation to combine forces with the regrouped Creation Society, but the subsequent abandonment of *Creation Weekly* was a sure sign of things gone awry.

Not until late February 1928, when he had finished his translation of Itagaki's book of art history, did Lu Xun return fire on Feng Naichao. Meanwhile, more denunciations of Lu Xun as being petit bourgeois and old-fashioned had been unleashed by Cheng Fangwu and Li Chuli. Perturbed by the ferocious attacks from the left, Lu Xun realized that the situation in Shanghai was much more complex than he had anticipated and he had to adopt different tactics.<sup>8</sup> By the time his response finally appeared in *Thread of Words* in March 1928, Qian Xingcun of the Sun Society had also chimed in, summarily declaring the death of the "era of Ah Q," thereby proclaiming the irrelevance of Lu Xun to the revolutionary period.<sup>9</sup>

In his rebuttal, Lu Xun voiced skepticism about the possibility of a revolutionary literature and posed some tough questions to the young Creators. Their call for a leap from "the weapon of art to the art of a weapon," he observed, was a slippery slogan, since "the art of a weapon" was obviously not an option; a revolutionary artist would have to accept the "battle on paper" as a new dream. "If he sacrifices his art and turns theory into reality, he most



likely will no longer be a revolutionary artist."<sup>10</sup> He saw self-deception in the Creators' exaggerated sense of what art or literature might achieve. His answer to Feng Naichao's disdain for humanitarian protests against violence was a down-to-earth one: "I do not wish a man of letters to go directly into action, for I know he is probably only good at writing."<sup>11</sup> He also poked fun at Cheng Fangwu's continual promise of a final victory. In the end, he likened the Creation Society's latest passion to the pursuit of conceptual innovations that had driven expressionism, Dadaism, and various other "isms" in modern art.

Lu Xun's response stemmed from his realist observation that "wherever revolutionary writers can act up a storm, there is in reality no revolution."<sup>12</sup> During the second half of 1927, in a series of lectures and essays, he had consistently argued that literature and politics followed their separate paths and that a genuine revolution often exceeded the most romantic imagination of a revolutionary writer. A revolutionary literature, in his view, was possible only with a credible revolutionary transformation of society and with the function of literature as a social institution changing accordingly. On this point, the difference between Lu Xun and his radical critics was not as insuperable as it may have appeared to be to both parties. What Lu Xun objected to was the blind, self-deceiving optimism to which advocates of a revolutionary literature subscribed at a moment when a national revolutionary movement had been brutally crushed under the pretext of "suppressing the counterrevolution." Their strident call to "supersede the age" sounded awfully like an escapist fantasy to Lu Xun.<sup>13</sup>

In 1931, a more generous Lu Xun would comment that, underneath a "fierce countenance of ultra-leftism," Cheng Fangwu and his colleagues lacked a close analysis of Chinese society, without which they were able to "mechanically employ methods that would work only in the Soviet political system."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, less than three months into the acrimonious 1928 debate, Lu Xun was already deploring that the so-called "writers of the fourth class" could hardly inflict any real pain on their target because they often missed the vital spots.<sup>15</sup> When an almost hysterical Guo Moruo, under the pen name Du Quan, assailed him for being a "redoubled counterrevolutionary" and a "frustrated Fascist" thirsting for young people's blood, Lu Xun had little to say and did not even bother to reply.<sup>16</sup>

Still, through much of 1928, Lu Xun felt beleaguered as at least nine periodicals took turns in maligning him. Most of these journals were short-lived, and their comments were of little concern to Lu Xun. However, *Gobi*, put out by Ye Lingfeng, a former member of the Creation Society, left an acute impression. In May, Ye Lingfeng published a cartoon lampooning "the old man with a half-*yin*, half-*yang* face," wielding his weapon of art behind a liquor vat.<sup>17</sup> Merely a few months before, Ye Lingfeng, as the graphic designer of *Northern Renaissance*, had been churning out sensual prints unabashedly imitative of the Orientalist style of Aubrey Beardsley as well as the Japanese illustrator Fukiya Kōji (1898–1979) (fig. 7).

One direct result of the siege on Lu Xun was that he had few places to publish. Overnight, the "intellectual forerunner" of the May Fourth period was rejected, characterized as outdated "feudal dregs" poisonous to a young generation of readers. Intrigued as well as puzzled, Lu Xun sought out books that would help him better grasp the new terms bandied



7 Ye Lingfeng, *Sleeping Lotus*, 1927.

about by the Creators.<sup>18</sup> The pressure from the young critics, he would graciously acknowledge later, forced him to familiarize himself with Marxist literary theory and the basic concepts of historical materialism.<sup>19</sup>

A turning point came in June 1928, when the Northern Renaissance Press invited Lu Xun and Yu Dafu to edit a new monthly called *The Current*. In the first five issues, Lu Xun published his own translations of Soviet literary policies. Writing to a friend in July, he remarked that literary criticism based on historical materialism was "most direct and clear," "capable of answering many obscure and difficult questions." And he deplored the confusion caused by the overbearing and superficial Creators.<sup>20</sup> He would go on to translate, again from Japanese sources, art and literary criticism by Russian Marxists such as Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875–1933) and Georgi Plekhanov. These translations were published in a series titled *Scientific Art Theory*, edited by Lu Xun and his young friend Feng Xuefeng (1903–1967) and made available in the summer of 1929.

Editing *The Current* quickly became a priority and a passion for Lu Xun, as Yu Dafu's affiliation was mostly a friendly gesture of support. Lu Xun became the sole editor after Yu Dafu started his own journal, *Public Literature* (with *Literaturo por Homaro* as its Esperanto title), in September 1928 (fig. 8). From the beginning, the challenge that Lu Xun faced was

8 Cover of *Public Literature*, October 1928.9 Cover of *The Current*, August 1928, with woodcut by Félix Vallotton.

to create a periodical that would stand out in the fiercely competitive journal market of Shanghai. (In 1928 alone, according to one source, twenty new literary periodicals were introduced in Shanghai, some of them lasting only one month.<sup>21</sup>) He designed a simple cover, most of it left blank, with the two large characters for the title at the very top. He also took great care in selecting visual elements to accentuate the main content of every issue. Xu Guangping later recalled that Lu Xun began purchasing a large number of foreign art books during this time, unsatisfied with the selection at the private Oriental Library of the Commercial Press.<sup>22</sup> For the July 1928 issue of *The Current*, which commemorated Maxim Gorky's sixtieth birthday, Lu Xun reproduced the colorful, futuristic portrait of the Soviet writer by Yuri Annenkov (1889–1974). He also translated a description of the artist from René Fülöp-Miller's influential *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, from which the image of the artwork was taken. One purpose, commented Lu Xun, was to expose the shallowness of a local "revolutionary artist"—meaning Ye Lingfeng—who only recently had been busy copying Beardsley and Fukiya Kōji.<sup>23</sup> In August, *The Current* had a special issue on the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906). On the cover, Lu Xun placed a signature woodcut portrait of the Norwegian playwright by the Swiss artist Félix Vallotton (1865–1925) (fig. 9).

*The Current's* cosmopolitan orientation, signaled by its visual presentation as well as its emphasis on translations, was part of Lu Xun's response to the advocates of a revolutionary literature, who, as he noted, soon moved on to the notion of a more militant, proletarian



犁耕 英Mabel Annesley 女士木刻，見 R.Rowley 的 *County Down Songs* 集中。M.Annesley 女士始終接近而實現 Rowley 君的理想，給他的歌以一種圖畫的解釋。別特在 *Annaloug* 中，Annesley 女士表示她運用自如的手腕，馬的這一種用力拖着犁經過厚重的泥土，我們很明顯的可以覺到。

10 Lady Mabel Annesley, woodcut, 1928.

literature.<sup>24</sup> Another strategy he employed was to seek new friends, especially among young people. The small number of creative literary works published in *The Current*, therefore, often came from obscure contributors. One of them was Rou Shi (1902–1931), a young writer who happened to find lodging a few doors down from Lu Xun's new rental apartment. Their meeting in September 1928 began a lasting friendship that would change many things in both of their lives. Before the end of the year, Lu Xun and Rou Shi formed the Morning Flowers Society and started a periodical called *Morning Flowers Weekly*.

From December 1928 to the following September, *Morning Flowers Weekly*, a miscellany of art and literature, kept a generally neutral profile. It had much in common with *The Current*, which continued publication until December 1929. Similarly committed to translations, the two periodicals presented literary works from many countries, including Denmark and Bulgaria, that were important to a humanist notion of world literature. What set *Morning Flowers Weekly* apart, however, was its purposeful introduction of the woodblock print as both graphic illustration and legitimate artwork. Beginning with its second issue, the journal frequently reproduced a woodcut as a highlight. The first woodcut to be featured in this way was an illustration (fig. 10) by Lady Mabel Annesley (1881–1959), which was accompa-



nied by a caption calling the reader's attention to the British artist's skillfulness in depicting horses straining to plow farmland.<sup>25</sup> A majority of the twenty images reproduced in the following issues were illustrations taken from books published in England, including works by Vivien Gribble (1888–1932), Stephen Bone (1904–1958), and Iain MacNab (1888–1956). In addition, Fukiya from Japan, Annie Bergman (1889–1987) from Sweden, Paulémile Pissarro (1884–1972) from France, and several others were represented. The techniques and subject matter of the reproduced works were remarkably diverse. The two depictions of the ocean by Stephen Bone, for instance, offered a textbook illustration of the differences in the effects of woodcuts and wood engravings. W. A. Wilson's *Hope*, with its art-deco-style abstract composition, stood in sharp contrast to E. R. Brews's grim and grainy study of a human face in *Head*.

Obviously not content with the scale or pace of introducing woodblock prints through a weekly magazine, Lu Xun decided to reprint more Western woodcuts in a series titled *Morning Flowers in the Garden of Art*. The first volume in the series (under the title *Selections of Modern Woodcuts*) came out before the end of January 1929. In his preface, Lu Xun made several general comments. First, he observed, it was likely that this art form, much revived in modern Europe, had originated in China. He then provided a brief outline of the history of the woodcut in Europe, highlighting the contributions of Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), Hans Holbein (1497–1543), and Thomas Bewick (1753–1828). Finally, Lu Xun drew a distinction between creative woodcuts and those used for reproduction purposes, noting that the creative woodcut was a "genuine and legitimate art" that had attracted many modern artists.<sup>26</sup>

The term for creative woodcuts (*chuangzuo muke*) that Lu Xun introduced here bore a direct affinity to the term that had been in use among modern Japanese printmakers for over two decades. The creative print (*sōsaku-hanga*) movement in Japan was initiated in 1904 when Ishii Hakutei celebrated as refreshingly modern a woodblock print titled *Fisherman* by Yamamoto Kanae (1882–1946), noting that the artist, a student of oil painting, had drawn, carved, and printed the image in two colors.<sup>27</sup> (Li Shutong, a contemporary of Kanae, arrived in Japan in 1905 and studied oil painting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, where Kanae was a student. After returning to China, Li reportedly experimented with printmaking, assembling a volume of prints around 1914. These prints are no longer extant, but they may have been the earliest modern-style woodcuts made in China.<sup>28</sup>) In 1909, Hakutei published an essay in which he distinguished the print used for reproduction (*fukusei-hanga*) from the creative print and described the unique visual quality of the woodblock print as the "taste of *hanga*."<sup>29</sup> A creative printmaker, he argued, was a modern artist with his own artistic vision, whereas the traditional printmaker was an artisan who faithfully reproduced drawings or calligraphy by other people. In 1918, Kanae, after returning from Europe, formed the Japan Creative Print Society with several other new-style printmakers, and at the beginning of 1919 the group held a sensationally successful exhibition in a department store in Tokyo. By 1929, when Lu Xun wrote of the distinction between creative and reproductive woodcuts in the Chinese context, the Japan Creative Print Society had organized eight shows and was about to mount its ninth and final one.<sup>30</sup>



11 Benvenuto Disertori, *La Musa del Loreto*,  
ca. 1927, woodcut.

The twelve prints reproduced in the first *Selections of Modern Woodcuts* were taken from three recent English journals: *The Bookman*, *The Studio*, and *The Woodcut of Today at Home and Abroad*. Among the eight artists whose work was featured were the illustrators Clifford Webb (1895–1972) and E. F. Daglish (1892–1964) from England, René Georges Hermann-Paul (1864–1940) from France, Benvenuto Disertori (1887–1969) from Italy, and C. B. Falls (1874–1960) and Edward Warwick (1881–1961) from the United States. Lu Xun offered a brief commentary on each of the artists, drawing on information provided in the original sources. He was particularly impressed by the exquisite lines and dramatic compositions in Webb's work and highly appreciative of Disertori's ingenious incorporation of natural wood grains in his *La Musa del Loreto* (fig. 11).<sup>31</sup>

Alongside this slim first volume, the Morning Flowers Society also published *Selected Paintings of Fukiya Kōji*. Commenting on Fukiya's work, Lu Xun observed that his soft lines served to reduce the shock that a sharper Aubrey Beardsley print would have, and that was probably why the sentimental Japanese artist appealed to Chinese youths more.<sup>32</sup> A few months later, a selection of Beardsley's graphic designs followed, with an informative preface by Lu Xun. Both volumes were produced, as Lu Xun would later explain, to deflate the "paper tiger"

Ye Lingfeng, who as an unabashed imitator of both Beardsley and Fukiya had won considerable fame and whose gross caricature of Lu Xun was never forgiven.<sup>33</sup>

A second volume of *Selections of Modern Woodcuts*, issued in April 1929, contained another twelve prints, representing artists from England, France, Germany, Russia, the United States, and Japan. This time, Lu Xun used his customary preface to explain, using English phrases, the technical difference between a "woodcut," which, he explained, was usually carved along the natural grains of the block, and the finer "wood engraving," which employed the harder, crosscut end grain. He then called for an "aesthetic of vigor" (*li zhi mei*), which he asserted would come through a creative print but not a reproductive one, for the creative print demanded that the artist work directly on the woodblock, using the engraving knife as an expressive pen. Lu Xun was concerned that this new aesthetic might not agree with the contemporary eye, because fashionable art mostly featured "beauties with slender shoulders, skinny monks, and fragmented constructivist paintings." A "dispirited and frail society," he warned, could hardly cultivate an art of vigor.<sup>34</sup>

The four volumes of selected prints, published in as many months at the beginning of 1929, marked the beginning of Lu Xun's endorsement of woodblock prints as an expressive and refreshing graphic art. In June, he arranged for a review of Douglas Percy Bliss's classic *History of Wood-Engraving* (1928) to be translated and published in *The Current*. He also recommended to his readers two other English publications as a good introduction to contemporary woodcuts.<sup>35</sup> When the fifth and final title in the *Morning Flowers in the Garden of Art* series came out as *Selected Paintings from New Russia*, in May 1930, Lu Xun would expound on his new understanding of visual art and its relationship to social change. He would also concede in dismay that the art world had by and large turned a blind eye to the black-and-white prints that he had made available so far.<sup>36</sup>

It may be true that no artists immediately took to woodcuts in response to Lu Xun's promotion of them, but before his series of reproductions, there had been several attempts at introducing the woodcut as a modern art form. As early as July 1924, for instance, *Short Story Magazine*, under the editorship of Zheng Zhenduo, had published on its cover an elaborate woodblock print by Albrecht Dürer. The journal identified the artistic medium as "wood engraving" (*mudiao*), a term that it would keep using until September 1929, when four prints by the prominent Polish sculptor and woodcut artist Władysław Skoczylas (1883–1934) were presented as "woodcuts" (*muke*) (fig. 12). (This change in terminology most likely occurred because of the *Modern Woodcuts* volumes put out by Lu Xun.<sup>37</sup>) During the five years between 1924 and 1929, *Short Story Magazine* introduced a few more woodblock prints through its pictorial inserts. Among them were two woodcuts by the Belgian artist Frans Masereel (1889–1972), a color illustration for a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale by W. Heath Robinson (1872–1944), and wood engravings by Herbert Pullinger (1878–1949) and Edward Warwick. The two Masereel prints, *The Engineer* and *The Boxer*, were reproduced in June 1925 and heralded a deep fascination with the master storyteller among Chinese artists and critics. The stylized wood engraving by Warwick that appeared in the October 1927 issue, *En-*



12 Władysław Skoczylas, *St. Sebastian*, 1915, woodcut.

*counter*, would be included by Lu Xun in his first *Selections of Modern Woodcuts* over a year later.

In fact, at least two more prints in the first *Selections of Modern Woodcuts* had already appeared in a Chinese publication. In February 1927, *Art Field Weekly* presented an introduction to the art of woodcuts, which included reproductions of four woodblock prints as well as an essay by Yi'an (presumably Zhang Yi'an, the literary and artistic editor of *Culture Arts Review*) on "woodcut pictures." One of the prints was *Old Xylographer* by Allen Lewis (1873–1957), which had just been featured in the January 1927 issue of *Short Story Magazine*. Clifford Webb's *Farm House* and C. B. Falls's *An Island Temple* were the two images that would be reprinted by Lu Xun nearly two years later. Such duplicated efforts may suggest a lack of coordination, but they also indicate how limited original sources were, as well as a common preference for depictions of foreign scenery and human figures. A refreshing exception to this prevalent taste was the November 1928 issue of *The Universal*, the intellectual journal



associated with the Lida Academy. As part of an introduction to cubism, futurism, and abstraction, the journal reproduced a nonfigurative, constructivist-style woodblock print in color by Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and a cubist landscape by Gino Severini (1883–1966). These were accompanied by an essay by Feng Zikai, a regular contributor of informative articles on art history and theory.

The essay by Yi'an in the February 1927 issue of *Art Field Weekly* was similar to Lu Xun's writings on woodcuts of two years later. It began with a review of the native tradition before moving on to the recent revival of woodcuts in Europe and the United States; this revival, observed the author, had arisen as a result of the expanded reach of art and artistic experimentation. He did not regard wood engraving as an indispensable art form, he noted, but was willing to endorse it as a new medium that "may well generate exceptionally impressive talents and produce exceptionally great art." About the four accompanying reproductions, he spoke approvingly of the "traces of the cutting knife, arrangement of black and white, representation of various objects and of light and shadow," and he pleaded with adventurous artists to give the medium a try.<sup>38</sup> One artist who seemed to take up this challenge was Jiang Xiaojian (1894–1939), who had studied oil painting and sculpture in France and on the third anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's death executed a highly competent woodcut portrait of the national hero. The print, which was prominently published in the government newspaper *Central Daily* on March 12, 1928, is a truly groundbreaking work in the history of modern Chinese woodcuts, not only because it introduced a new artistic medium, but also because it treated such a solemn subject (fig. 13).

As we have seen, visual elements in publications such as *Deluge* and *Sun Monthly* had, since the mid-1920s, associated left-wing literary groups with black-and-white graphics emulating woodblock prints. Ye Lingfeng led the way in defining a visual style for the Creation Society during its *Deluge* days, even though his imitations of Aubrey Beardsley would draw disdain from Lu Xun. At the beginning of 1928, Xu Xunlei's stark illustrations for *Sun Monthly* further confirmed expressive prints as the visual extension of the revolutionary literary movement (fig. 14). Soon, artists identifying with the nascent cultural left wing started making images that observed the generic conventions of mass-producible, modern political posters. *Awakening*, by the cartoonist Wang Yiliu (1899–1990), for instance, appeared in the May 1928 issue of *Sun Monthly* (fig. 15). *The Liberated Prisoner*, by Xu Xingzhi, was published in the second issue of *Flowing Sand*, on April 1, 1928. This latter print reflected the rising proletarian art movement in Japan, where the political cartoonist Yanase Masamu (1900–1945), who had been an experimental oil painter and key member of the avant-garde Mavo group, had put together a collection titled *World Proletarian Pictures* in mid-1927.<sup>39</sup>

Against this background, the cosmopolitan outlook that Lu Xun brought to the *Morning Flowers in the Garden of Art* series suggested a deliberate distancing from the adoption of woodcuts by politically daring or explosive publications. Such distancing would certainly agree with Lu Xun's general unease about the strident arguments made for a revolutionary literature at the time. His fascination with the creative woodcut as an expressive artistic



13 Jiang Xiaojian, *Sun Yat-sen*, 1928, woodcut.



14 Xu Xunlei, *Kiss*, 1928, woodcut.



15 Wang Yiliu, *Awakening*, 1928.

medium had led him instead to see in the medium an “aesthetic of vigor” and a challenge to what he described as a “dispirited and frail society.”

Lu Xun’s growing appreciation of the woodcut was shared by a group of literary modernists as well. In September 1929, Liu Na’ou (1900–1939), Shi Zhecun (1905–2003), and Dai Wangshu (1905–1950) started a monthly called *La Nouvelle Literature*. The journal’s visual emblem was a woodcut depicting three peasants working in a field. Neither the source of the image nor the name of the artist who created it was identified, but the image would be imitated by an aspiring woodcut artist a few years later. Even Ye Lingfeng, after starting the journal *Modern Fiction* in early 1928, would expand his interest in the woodcut and arrange for works of American printmakers Benjamin Miller (1877–1964) and Rockwell Kent (1882–1971) to be reproduced in its pages.

As Lu Xun would later recount, the purpose of the Morning Flowers Society was “to introduce the literature from Eastern and Northern Europe and to import foreign prints, because we all believed that we should foster a literature and an art that were vigorous and unpretentious.”<sup>40</sup> By “vigorous and unpretentious,” Lu Xun was referring to the work’s cultural orientation, not merely its style or aesthetic quality. By the time he offered this description of the society’s project, in spring 1933, a great deal had changed, not the least of which was Lu Xun’s own political position. By then, a woodcut movement was gaining momentum

and Lu Xun would have played a critical role in clarifying its aesthetic and political affiliations. To the fragmented art establishment, the woodcut movement would represent a youthful and radical challenge.

## ART AND ITS DISCONTENT

The seventh issue of *Morning Flowers Weekly*, published on January 17, 1929, relayed a brief news report on the forthcoming *National Fine Arts Exhibition*. Confirming that the exhibition was to take place in Shanghai in mid-March, the report listed members of various committees that constituted the governing board of the event. Cai Yuanpei, former chancellor of the now-defunct University Council, was named honorary chair of the board, and the current minister of education, Jiang Menglin (1886–1964), was its executive director. The committee overseeing general affairs had twenty-three members, including prominent figures in the field of art and art criticism such as Xu Beihong, Lin Fengmian, Liu Haisu, Jiang Xiaojian, Xu Zhimo, and Lin Wenzheng. Lest the enormous political investment and symbolism of the exhibition escape anyone, top leaders of the Nationalist Party and the Nanjing government were invited to be among the twenty-one honorary judges. A nine-member honorary advisory committee was added to accommodate still more celebrities.

Such pomp did little to ensure that the exhibition would open on time. The original plan was to hold two semiannual exhibitions in Nanjing under the auspices of the University Council, with the first show opening on January 1, 1929.<sup>41</sup> However, in October 1928, as the University Council was changed back to the Ministry of Education, the project had to be modified. The exhibition site was subsequently moved from Nanjing to Shanghai and the opening date pushed back to February 15.<sup>42</sup> Yet not until April 10, 1929, was a grand opening finally held, at the New Hall of General Cultivation. The previous November, this facility had hosted the much-trumpeted National Products Exposition, organized by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.<sup>43</sup>

The opening ceremony for the historic first *National Fine Arts Exhibition* was well attended, but only a handful of the dignitaries listed on the various honorary committees made an appearance. (This was in sharp contrast to the opening of the National Products Exposition, which had been attended by Chiang Kai-shek and other high-ranking officials.) The educational function of the state-sponsored event was clearly underscored, as the lengthy inauguration program included solemn salutes to the Nationalist flag and Sun Yat-sen’s portrait, followed by a ritual recitation of Sun Yat-sen’s deathbed teachings.<sup>44</sup> That Cai Yuanpei did not come to witness the grand opening must have been an odd detail.<sup>45</sup> He had every reason to be pleased with the exhibition, which was at the heart of his long-cherished vision for a general aesthetic education. Similarly, the fact that Lu Xun, who in 1913 had promoted galleries and exhibitions as a means for disseminating art, showed no interest in the national exhibition may have indicated a profound conceptual change on his part with regard to the



meaning and function of art. During the month in which the exhibition was on display, Lu Xun was busy finishing several translations. When he did find time to visit an art show, he went to see oil paintings by the avant-garde Japanese artist Urugawa Yasuro (1904–1986) instead, even purchasing a painting to decorate his apartment.<sup>46</sup>

Besides representing a unified modern nation, the first *National Fine Arts Exhibition* was meant to showcase achievements in the field of art. More than 2,200 recent and contemporary works were on display, and the close to nine hundred selected artists represented more than twenty provinces and administrative regions. The main content of the exhibition, which took up two floors, was divided into seven sections: traditional calligraphy and painting, Western-style painting, bronze and stone inscriptions, sculpture, architecture, crafts and designs, and photography. Four supplementary categories were created to display works by recent masters, masterpieces from previous dynasties, paintings by modern Japanese artists, and oil paintings by a small number of Westerners living in Shanghai. One contemporary reviewer, Li Yuyi, was so elated by the grand spectacle that he proudly compared the exhibition to the French Salon and the Japanese Teiten. The same enthusiastic reviewer predicted that the impact of the event would be similar to that of European postimpressionism, which signaled a watershed between ancient and modern art and marked a magnificent new beginning in art history.<sup>47</sup>

Li Yuyi's four-part report appeared in the July 1929 issue of *The Ladies' Journal*, which was devoted entirely to the fine arts exhibition. In tracing the origin and design of the event, Li Yuyi referred to the arts and crafts section of the 1910 South Sea Business Promotion Exposition in Nanjing as the earliest modern-style fine arts exhibition in China. He then mentioned about a dozen shows organized by various art societies and organizations since that time, such as those by the Celestial Horse Society and the Painting Method Research Society of Peking University. He also acknowledged a growing number of individual shows that had been held in recent years. The reporter then recounted Cai Yuanpei's initial proposal and Lin Fengmian's prominent role, as head of the Art Education Commission of the University Council, before the reinstated Ministry of Education took charge of the exhibition. This change in leadership, in Li's account, allowed many more artists to be involved.

The transition from the Art Education Commission to a new governing board was not as smooth as Li Yuyi suggested, however, for the reorganization in effect wrested the lead role in the contemporary art field from Lin Fengmian and his group. In a speech earlier in 1928, Lin had reminded his students of the grave responsibility assumed by the National Art Academy and specifically called their attention to "the unprecedented, grand festival," the upcoming national exhibition.<sup>48</sup> The speech was subsequently published in the first issue of *Apollo* in October 1928. By then, the Art Education Commission had made public a set of guidelines for the national exhibition.<sup>49</sup> When the much-delayed sixth number of *Apollo* came out in spring 1929, however, it contained a collective statement on the *National Fine Arts Exhibition* organized by the Ministry of Education. Claiming the exhibition as part of

the May Fourth project for a Chinese renaissance, the statement underscored the historic role of the Art Education Commission. It then conceded that artistic temperaments and lack of experience had probably made unavoidable "the many disputes, big and small, that arose from decisions about selection and display, and from the different camps of organizers involved in the process." What was inexplicable and inexcusable to the editorial board of *Apollo* and members of the Art Movement Society was the presence of about one hundred paintings shipped in from Japan.<sup>50</sup> This document revealed a growing discordance and foreshadowed the protest exhibition that the Art Movement Society would organize.

Besides the inclusion of Japanese paintings, the section displaying masterpieces from past dynasties also spurred criticism. A commentator identified as Kaifan (probably Feng Zikai under a pen name) questioned the wisdom of parading antiques, despite his appreciation for the opportunity to view so many private collections that had not been accessible until that time: "They instantly deprive the exhibition of a progressive spirit that a new and upcoming country should have. What remains is still an excessive nostalgia for antiquated objects." The reverence for antiquity, combined with an obvious intention to "whitewash the present for an appearance of peace and prosperity," made the commentator wonder aloud whether the country was new and promising after all. He also questioned the effects of such a large, unwieldy exhibition.<sup>51</sup>

No such contentious divisions or queries appeared in the exalting report that Li Yuyi provided for the special issue of *The Ladies' Journal*. Given the journal's target audience, his report focused on women artists and their achievements, whereas two accompanying articles by Songyao focused on the various trends represented by the sections of Chinese and Western paintings. The most striking feature of the nine exhibition halls showcasing Chinese painting, in Songyao's view, was the predominance of literati painting. He regarded the expressive literati painting as an aesthetic response to a fast-moving, time-conscious modern life, and in its flourishing he even foresaw an impact on European art. Among the more than 1,200 exhibited works, Songyao sorted out eight schools, which he further grouped into three convenient categories: the traditionalists, the compromisers, and the progressives. While the traditionalists continued a codified rendition of landscape in the style of the orthodox Four Wangs of the early Qing,<sup>52</sup> compromisers such as Gao Jianfu and Gao Qifeng of the Lingnan School strove for an effect of verisimilitude by incorporating techniques of Western representational art. The so-called progressives, inspired by the unconstrained, expressive paintings of early Qing masters such as Shitao (1642–1707) and Zhu Da (1622–1705), enjoyed most of Songyao's sympathy and appreciation. He approvingly described their practice as "taking creation itself as art while regarding convention or imitation as shameful." (Liu Haisu was among the artists he identified as progressive.) The younger generation of artists was uniformly drawn to this approach, Songyao noted, and the exhibition was consequently overflowing with such updated literati painting.<sup>53</sup> The same three categories were used by another reviewer, who also identified an influential Shanghai Meizhuan style straddling the compromisers and the progressives.<sup>54</sup>

The 354 paintings that made up the Western section drew more extended comments from Songyao. With a brief overview of the history of Western painting and its presence in China since the Ming and Qing dynasties, Songyao observed that in the previous twenty years Chinese artists had learned about modern Western art mostly through Japan. This explained the popularity of late impressionist works, he explained, as they were favored by Japanese oil painters. The recent return of art students from Europe had undermined the Japanese-mediated influence and given rise to a more systematic training and representational realism. Yet as Western painting was far from being accepted, he added, artists trained in this area had no employment options other than to teach in a classroom.

Songyao then proceeded to discuss six identifiable schools of Western painting represented at the exhibition. In the process, he provided expert readings of important works. The first group was defined as "realist," and it included Xu Beihong, Li Yishi, Jiang Xiaojian, and Pan Yuliang (1895–1953), whose main subject matter Songyao identified as portraits and human figures. The second was a school that shared a "stylistic" preference in its landscapes and came very close to postimpressionism. A case in point was Wang Jiyuan's idiosyncratic depiction of a snow scene. The third and fourth groups were labeled "para-romanticism" and "para-impressionism," respectively. Li Yishi's solid and dramatic re-creation of a historical scene was hailed as exemplary of a romantic fascination with the past, whereas Zhu Qizhan and Liu Haisu supposedly demonstrated a deep affinity with impressionism in their rich and sensitive renderings of scenery. The fifth school was characterized as "postimpressionism," which Songyao and many of his contemporaries believed to be intimately related, if not indebted, to Chinese painting. He referred to Paul Gauguin and Henri Matisse, commented on their popularity among Japanese artists, and named Liu Haisu, Wang Yachen, and Guan Liang as having unleashed a postimpressionist movement through their teaching positions at the Shanghai Meizhuan. Finally, Songyao introduced the term "futurism" and admitted that very few works showed a futuristic fascination with speed or a constructivist approach. He did suggest that Tao Yuanqing, Situ Qiao, and Ding Yanyong (1902–1978) might be moving into the uncharted territory of "para-futurism."<sup>55</sup>

That no mention was made of Lin Fengmian's work in this comprehensive description must have come across as rather unusual to a contemporary reader with some knowledge of the art field, for Lin was, after all, dean of the National Art Academy and six of his paintings were on display at the exhibition. Li Yuyi did make a remark on Lin Fengmian in his review, but it was clearly a disparaging comment because he was lauding, through comparison, the admirable precision of the oil painter Cai Weilian (1904–1939) in capturing complex human expression in her portraiture. This curious reticence on the critics' part may be attributed to the controversy that Lin and his Art Movement Society interjected while the exhibition was being organized. It may also have reflected a more reserved assessment of Lin Fengmian's work after his solo exhibition in February 1928. Two representative reviews of the earlier show had appeared in the journal *Contributions*. While a young literary critic had hailed Lin Fengmian's paintings as yielding "an outcry of the destroyer" against a suffocat-

ing silence, the painter and art critic Yu Jianhua (1895–1979) was not as gung-ho: arguing that it would be more appropriate to consider Lin Fengmian as a thinker than as a painter, Yu Jianhua discussed both the strengths and weaknesses of a conceptually based visual art. He was particularly critical of abstract paintings such as *Quivering Gold* and did not hesitate to point out that Lin's famous *Will to Life* (see fig. 3, p. 31) lacked a convincing precision in the anatomy of the four tigers.<sup>56</sup>

Another intriguing passage in Songyao's report on the exhibition was the inclusion of Xu Beihong in the list of realist artists, even though Xu, in protest against the exhibition's poor organization, had boycotted the event. For the greater part of 1929, Xu Beihong was absorbed in creating *Tian Heng and His Five Hundred Retainers*, his first large-scale historical painting, which would fully display his dedicated training in France (plate 3). This work would be followed by *Pray for the Coming of Our Savior*, finished in 1933. Not directly involved in the exhibition, Xu Beihong nonetheless found it a good occasion to voice his views on modern Western art as well as his hope for the future of Chinese art. Hardly had the exhibition opened when he entered a heated debate with the poet Xu Zhimo, co-editor of the official exhibition newsletter. This well-publicized exchange between the two Xus touched on many formal issues about modern art that would continue to resonate throughout the art world.

Xu Beihong and Xu Zhimo had in fact had a preview of the exhibition before it opened. The artist subsequently described his reaction in an article titled "Puzzled," which was slightly misleading because he was less puzzled or confused than he was excited. Despite his boycott, he was excited that a national exhibition was being held, and he was particularly excited, as he noted in his article, about what was absent—"shameless works" by the likes of Paul Cézanne, Matisse, and Pierre Bonnard. He voiced a strong distaste for these "pretentious" modern-day artists, because their art showed no credible training and their fame rested solely on a rebellious gesture and manipulative art dealers. (Xu claimed that he could easily churn out Matisse-style paintings at the rate of two an hour.) The main thrust of his essay was a celebration of the magnificent, "all-encompassing" tradition of French art. An unabashed Francophile, Xu Beihong enumerated in two sweeping paragraphs about thirty masters, insisting on spelling out their names in French and praising each of them for a unique style or talent. Against such a glorious tradition, he asserted, the art created in France since World War I was worrisome, because "the dignity of fine arts became clouded and eroded, and vulgar trends competed to be fashionable." He was concerned that a national art museum in China might squander its resources on collecting a Cézanne or Matisse, which would be no better, in his view, than importing morphine or heroin.<sup>57</sup>

Writing in his idiosyncratic semiclassical Chinese, Xu Beihong expressed puzzlement not so much over what an artist should do as over what modern art had come to. His disdain for Cézanne and Matisse was so uncompromising that it drew an emotional response from the first reader of his essay. In his reply, "I Am Puzzled Too," five times as long as the instigating piece, Xu Zhimo began with a discussion of the art of art criticism, quoting Bertrand



Russell's observation that "opinions that are held with passion are always those for which no good ground exists." He applauded Xu Beihong's dogged adherence to "ancient ways," an assessment with which Tian Han, another close friend of Xu Beihong, would concur the following year, by describing the artist as "a stubborn classicist."<sup>58</sup> Xu Zhimo conceded that postimpressionism had gained momentum largely because it looked easy, and he paid respect to Xu Beihong for his genuine indignation: "You stand for a reaction, a reaction against what you deem to be a completely *Anarchic* movement."<sup>59</sup> However, after acknowledging that Xu Beihong may well have been the only Chinese to have seen more than three hundred Cézanne originals and claiming for himself the honor of being the first person to bring back to China color prints of works by Cézanne, he went on to defend the rustic artist from Provence and his devotion to art.<sup>60</sup> He was puzzled as to why Xu Beihong did not find fault with Pablo Picasso, Vincent van Gogh, or Gauguin. "Isn't it true that what weighs the most in our evaluation of art is *an independent artistic vision* and a genuine artistic sensibility? What is an artist, if not for his desire to express, through a painted or sculpted work, certain inspirational experience that he alone encounters?" Xu Zhimo's apology for Cézanne revolved around the artist's gravely misunderstood life, his pursuit of perfection, and his ineptitude at raking in monetary profits. What the poet did not feel confident to discuss was Cézanne's art itself, for he realized that it would be "an unforgivable sin" for an amateur to prattle on about art in front of an artist.

These two letters about puzzlement were published in the exhibition newsletter in late April. Perturbed by the adamant tone of the two Xus, Cai Yuanpei wrote an essay titled "The Relative Nature of Art Criticism" for the following issue. Cai refrained from mentioning names and did not indicate his sympathy for either party, although he most probably would have sided with Xu Zhimo.<sup>61</sup> Both Cai and Xu Zhimo were fans of Liu Haisu, in whose work they saw a creative resemblance to van Gogh and Gauguin. The tendency toward "subjective expression" in modern art, affirmed Cai Yuanpei in his 1926 endorsement of a collection of Liu Haisu's oil paintings, no longer took verisimilitude as the first priority and thereby signaled a new level of human self-consciousness.<sup>62</sup>

Following Cai Yuanpei's intervention, Li Yishi, a respected senior oil painter, stepped into the fray, declaring that he was simply not puzzled. He was not puzzled, he explained, because he saw the exchange as a mismatch between an artist and a critic. As an artist, he shared Xu Beihong's dislike for Cézanne and Matisse and would not hesitate to prohibit his own child from imitating their work, but he also appreciated Xu Zhimo's respect for the artist. Li Yishi then stated that artistic styles were related to the times and that artists bore a social responsibility. Even if Xu Beihong erred in attributing Cézanne's belated fame to art dealers, and even if Cézanne and Matisse expressed nothing but genuine emotion, Li Yishi noted, he would still oppose their becoming popular in China: after years of chaos, art ought to become a force in "orienting people's ideas and comforting their mind." Furthermore, with regard to artistic development, Li Yishi believed that China would benefit from a more comprehensive introduction of classical Western art. "When one red dot is added to a background

of gray," he reasoned through a visual metaphor, "we all find it intriguing. But if the gray background is still to be brushed in, that one red dot may not be an appropriate addition."<sup>63</sup>

Li Yishi's comments brought to the fore the deep-seated concern with the status and function of art that had prompted Xu Beihong to write his initial article. Without having seen Li's intervention in the debate, Xu Beihong made similar arguments in a follow-up essay, in which he continued his plea for a representational art with credible formal properties. He did not spurn Gauguin, he explained, because form had survived in his art. "The essence of *art plastique* is *forme* first, color second. . . . If there is no form, how can one talk about art?"<sup>64</sup> He continued: "Judging from my humble study of Cézanne, I think he was an individual endowed with a strong will but with insufficient sensibility or talent."<sup>65</sup> As to his own approach to artistic creation, Xu Beihong stated that he aspired to "*un Art savant*," an intelligent art that absorbed all and did not apotheosize any one school, not even the classic style. "As for my only hope for dear fellow artists, they should patiently experience nature and observe it accurately. One does not need to begin by embracing some doctrine that will only serve to block one's vision."<sup>66</sup> He also made clear his resentment for "any art in an academic style" and reiterated his call for a rejection of all conventions, not merely the masters of the early Qing period.

Yet Xu Zhimo, the romantic poet, was not ready to be persuaded. The two Xus had entered the debate as friends and in the end agreed to disagree amicably. They did not designate themselves as spokespeople of antagonistic institutions or political ideologies, nor was it evident that at the end of the debate "realism had become a discipline and a mandate among Xu Beihong and his followers."<sup>67</sup> The final word, if there was any, did not belong to either of the two Xus. Before Xu Zhimo could make public a further reply, the artist Yang Qingqing, co-editor of the exhibition newsletter, stepped in and imposed a respite. Yang viewed the exchange as a stimulating and laudable event in the field of art, especially against the backdrop of a "dull and indifferent society." Yet the more urgent task for artists, he asserted, was to engage actively in a general educational campaign so that "the public may gain more understanding of the power of art, become more passionate, and develop inner demands." Artists should also help the misguided or insincere among their ranks to see better, move them forward, and make them become the vanguard of the age. In a mild reproach of Xu Beihong for his withdrawal from the *National Fine Arts Exhibition*, Yang Qingqing reminded him that he too must shoulder this grave responsibility.<sup>68</sup>

It would have been just as pertinent for the peacemaker to direct such a reminder to Xu Zhimo, whose passionate defense of Cézanne was based on a romantic notion of individual genius and originality, and for whom there was no compelling reason to translate aesthetics into social consequences. For Xu Beihong, art was first of all a vocation that demanded commitment as well as discipline; he would not find the talk of social responsibility particularly helpful, but was determined to see dignity and symbolic values embodied in the creation of art and in institutions of art. At the beginning of 1930, he would try to organize the Central Fine Arts Association. In the manifesto he drafted for the failed venture, he opened with

a reference to the philosopher Mencius and his notions of universal taste and beauty.<sup>69</sup> Three years later, together with Li Yishi, he would join the official Art Association of China and become a board member. An avowed admirer of the classical tradition in European art, Xu Beihong would always turn to state-sponsored institutions as the proper means to make art a rigorous and respectable profession. "Had he had the fortune to be born in Europe close to the end of Renaissance," his friend Tian Han observed in 1930, "Beihong would certainly have been a loyal painter of the aristocratic class, much like Rubens."<sup>70</sup>

On the surface, the series of reactions touched off by Xu Beihong's confession of puzzlement was about modern Western art and its reception in China. In the context of the *National Fine Arts Exhibition*, the different voices underscored the question of what sort of art should be recognized or even promoted at a state-sponsored art event. A contemporary art critic and historian would later observe that artists boycotting the event were squabbling in every case over prestige and influence.<sup>71</sup> A more intractable question had to do with the purpose of the exhibition. If the report by Songyao carried a congratulatory undertone by listing all the recognizable schools and up-to-date styles, Yang Qingqing's plea for greater social engagement suggested that more than artistic form or competence was at stake. Indeed, the idea of a national exhibition had long been cherished by proponents of aesthetic education, but the actual operation and political implications of the event turned out to be alienating. In spite of its claim to comprehensiveness, the *National Fine Arts Exhibition* as a government institution inevitably turned into a mechanism of exclusion. Among those who felt excluded were Lin Fengmian and his Art Movement Society.

Following its initial complaint about the organization of the national exhibition, the Art Movement Society went on to decry the event as a failure. A collective statement published in *Apollo* deplored the many "slovenly shams" that filled the exhibition halls. Addressing an imaginary visitor hoping to enjoy a refreshing experience like strolling through a garden, the statement asked rhetorically: "After you rush through the two compounds, three floors, and several dozen exhibition rooms, do not these flowers make you feel the same way as your two stiff legs—sore, fatigued, and despondent?"<sup>72</sup> Part of the blame had to go to the artists of the nation, the statement claimed, because they had not submitted enough works but showed more interest in private events. The statement did not mention that a number of paintings submitted by members of the Art Movement Society had been rejected, but in late May 1929 the society organized a group show to display works not included in the national exhibition.<sup>73</sup> Serving as the centerpiece of this show, held in the French Concession in Shanghai, was Lin Fengmian's oil painting *Agony* (fig. 16).<sup>74</sup> Of the same conceptual genre as his earlier expressionist masterpiece *Groping in the Dark*, the large canvas presents three naked women positioned in various tortured postures, evidently suffering from an overwhelming and inexpressible internal torment. Such a stark image fraught with emotional potency hardly resonated with the official discourse surrounding the *National Fine Arts Exhibition*; it was not a surprise that *Agony* had been kept out of an art show that sought to present a prosperous and modernizing nation.



16 Lin Fengmian, *Agony*, ca. 1929, oil on canvas.

The catalogue accompanying the Art Movement Society exhibition included the society's manifesto and charter, a personal account by Li Puyuan of the group's history and activities, and essays on Wu Dayu (1903–1988) and Cai Weilian, both prominent members of the group. The manifesto, authored by Lin Wenzheng, defined the mission of the Art Movement Society as broadcasting "the gospel of art" in general and creating "an art for the new age" in particular. Its first objective was to bring together new artistic talents in the country for the common cause of an art movement.<sup>75</sup>

The Art Movement Society's spirited protest against the *National Fine Arts Exhibition* marked a new departure for this group of mostly French-trained artists. In their pursuit of an independent and cosmopolitan art movement, they remained faithful to their liberal-humanist ideals about art and artistic creation, but they began to see their institutional base being increasingly marginalized.<sup>76</sup> It was no accident that the once-close ties between Cai Yuanpei and Lin Fengmian cooled considerably after the 1929 national exhibition. When a systemic reorganization of higher education came along the following year, the National Art Academy was renamed (for a short time) the Hangzhou Art College and its academic departments were reduced to sections, much to the chagrin of both faculty and students. Meanwhile, the Art Movement Society would hold shows in Tokyo in 1930, Nanjing in 1931, and Shanghai in 1934, but for reasons that we will explore further, their impact diminished with each exhibition.

All the complaints and detractions, however, did not deter Cai Yuanpei from viewing the first *National Fine Arts Exhibition* as a historic and spectacular success. A few months after the event, he expressed gratification in his preface to a commemorative catalogue and thanked officials and artists for their dedication. Confident that documents of the exhibition would become invaluable materials in the history of fine arts in China, Cai took pride in announcing himself as "the first person to be associated with the exhibition."<sup>77</sup>

A more critical and politically charged evaluation of the *National Fine Arts Exhibition* would come in the eventful spring of 1930. It was authored by Xu Xingzhi, who had returned



from Japan and emerged as a central figure in the nascent "new movement in fine arts" of the left.

### SEEING IN BLACK AND WHITE

In addition to the high-profile, faculty-only Art Movement Society, the National Art Academy in Hangzhou also supported many student art groups on its campus. The earliest of these was formed in January 1929. It being the eighteenth year in the Republican calendar, the group decided to give itself a plain enough name: Eighteen Art Society. Little did the members know how quickly they would split up and be drawn to conflicting views on art and politics. Nor did they anticipate the reach and intensity of the new art movement their organization would help set in motion. In the history of modern Chinese art, the Eighteen Art Society is always recalled as the first group to publicly exhibit creative woodblock prints. Its brief history presents a complex picture of how a new art practice was articulated and then acquired recognition. It also throws into relief the tremendous shifts in cultural politics and artistic vision at the beginning of the 1930s.

During its first year of existence, the Eighteen Art Society modeled itself after the faculty group on campus and displayed exercises by members every Saturday. Among its faculty advisors was Lin Fengmian, the school's dean. After its first off-campus show in the city of Hangzhou, the society brought a more ambitious exhibition to Shanghai in the spring of 1930. Due to the group's institutional affiliation, the Shanghai exhibition (held at the influential Clubhouse for Ningbo Natives) caused a sensation among art circles. The exhibition catalogue had calligraphy by Cai Yuanpei on its cover and featured articles by Li Jinfa and other noted critics.<sup>78</sup> Soon after the Shanghai exhibition, however, the society split into two groups after one of its members, Zhang Tiao (1901–1934), was arrested on charges of political subversion.<sup>79</sup> While the newly created West Lake Eighteen Art Society stayed within the orbit of institutional legitimacy, the original Eighteen Art Society, at first considerably reduced in size, would go on to have a much broader impact.

The shake-up generated no known manifestos or apologies. For the historic show presented by the reorganized Eighteen Art Society in June 1931, the poet Ji Chundan (1908–1964, later known as Liyang), a newcomer to the society, composed a brief statement in which he vaguely referred to a depressing, moribund atmosphere prior to a joyful resurrection.<sup>80</sup> More telling was the subsequent expulsion from the National Art Academy of several core members of the Eighteen Art Society, among them Chen Zhuokun (1908–2002) and Chen Tiegeng (1906–1970). After his release from prison, Zhang Tiao was also summarily expelled from the school, as was another student, Yu Hai (1909–1991), for suspected involvement in leftist politics. Ever since the student unrest that had marred the official opening of the National Art Academy, Lin Fengmian and the provost, Lin Wenzheng, had had little tolerance for political activism on campus. Paranoid about a politicized student body, the adminis-

tration allowed only for academic interests and pursuits. By November 1931, according to one report, the school had expelled more than fifty students, mostly on political grounds, and the most notorious case of police arrest on campus was still to come.<sup>81</sup> (In addition to this, a small number of students would be treated to a more respectable "advised withdrawal," in part because they hailed from the same township in Guangdong as Lin Fengmian.<sup>82</sup>)

The unease felt by the National Art Academy's administration was far from groundless, especially by the spring of 1930. Zhang Tiao, for instance, was a member of the outlawed Chinese Communist Party (CCP). A left turn in intellectual and social discourse was becoming ever more contagious, and the liberal-humanist project of universal art, still dear to Lin Fengmian and his associates, was increasingly put on the defensive.<sup>83</sup> Sensing the rising tide of political radicalism, many intellectuals committed to liberal values made the difficult choice of siding with the increasingly beleaguered Nationalist government. The efficacy of the Republic during this period was militarily compromised by regional warlords, and its political legitimacy was continually threatened by the local Soviet governments set up by the Communists in the mountainous Jiangxi-Hunan border region, directly southwest of the capital of Nanjing. The sensible path for the nation to follow, the arch-liberal Hu Shi reasoned in April 1930, must not be that of violent revolution or social disorder, which would only undermine the still-nascent state; the greatest obstacles in the path to an "orderly, prosperous, civilized, modern, and unified nation-state" were not the phantom of capitalism or the long-defunct feudal system, but poverty, disease, ignorance, embezzlement, and disorder.<sup>84</sup>

In spring 1930, the event that symbolized as much as exacerbated the great divide between liberal and leftist intellectuals was the formation of the League of Left-Wing Writers (the Zuolian). On March 2, this parapolitical alliance formally declared its existence in Shanghai at a meeting attended by more than fifty representatives. Most prominent among those present was Lu Xun, who was the first to deliver a speech after formal announcements were made by Feng Naichao and others. Lu Xun was also listed on the seven-member executive committee, along with Xia Yan (1900–1995), Feng Naichao, Qian Xingcun, and Tian Han. (Guo Moruo was conspicuously absent. He had been living in Tokyo since early 1928 and would remain there until 1937. His contribution to the Zuolian was royalties from his translation of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.<sup>85</sup>) Formed under the covert guidance of the CCP, the Zuolian as an umbrella organization would systematically develop and implement policies and strategies for the cultural left wing until early 1936, when it was voluntarily dissolved amid factional and frivolous disputes.<sup>86</sup>

Preparations for a federation similar to the Soviet RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, formed in 1925) and the Japanese NAPF (Nippona Artista Proleta Federacio, formed in 1928) had begun around October 1929. Earlier, a directive from the CCP leadership had ordered members of the Creation Society and the Sun Society to cease their sectarian debates and orchestrated attacks on Lu Xun. The message was clear: for a left-wing cultural movement to survive in Shanghai, it could not afford to alienate Lu Xun and cut itself off from the May Fourth intellectual tradition. A preparatory committee, representing

various groups within the left-wing movement, met regularly in the following months to draft documents, review potential members, and address sensitive issues, such as what title would best benefit Lu Xun.<sup>87</sup> Even though he remained ill at ease with the rash proponents for a revolutionary literature, Lu Xun had grown more familiar with and even sympathetic to the positions of his young critics. In August 1929, a tabloid in Shanghai declared that Lu Xun had "surrendered" to the Creation Society, citing his recent interest in perusing and translating Marxist theories on art and literature.<sup>88</sup> The joining of forces between these former adversaries would be openly acknowledged on February 1, 1930, when an essay by Feng Naichao appeared in the second issue of *Germination*, a monthly started by Lu Xun.

On March 2, the secret meeting that announced the birth of the Zuolian was held in a two-story building that housed the China College of Art, which had become an institutional stronghold for the left-wing cultural movement. The private school had come into being in the winter of 1925 when a group of students and faculty left the struggling Shanghai Art College in protest and, as was the trend, created their own college with a more grandiose name. Noted artists Chen Baoyi and Ding Yanyong had been invited to head its fine arts department.<sup>89</sup> By fall 1929, with Xia Yan as its academic dean, the school had come under CCP control. On its faculty were members of the defunct Creation and Sun societies. In order to extend the leftist presence to the Western painting department, Xia Yan telegraphed Xu Xingzhi and summoned him back from Tokyo to be department chair. Soon, Shen Xiling (1904–1940) also returned from Japan to join Xu Xingzhi in the department, along with the cartoonist Wang Yiliu.<sup>90</sup> Before the China College of Art was shut down by the police in May 1930, Xu Xingzhi and his colleagues would organize several events on campus, including providing security for the inaugural Zuolian meeting.

Upon assuming his appointment at the China College of Art, Xu Xingzhi had undertaken the task of laying the theoretical foundation for a new art movement. In December 1929, he finished a programmatic article titled "The Task of the New Fine Arts Movement," which would be published in the monthly *Art* in March 1930. (The monthly, edited by Xia Yan as the organ of the left-wing Society of Art Theaters, was banned after one issue amid a widespread government crackdown.) In his essay, similar in style and spirit to Feng Naichao's December 1927 essay "Art and Social Life," Xu asserted that the new movement in fine arts would not only be part of a general cultural movement, but it would also confront the question of class relations and class consciousness. Xu Xingzhi concluded from his sweeping survey of the art movement since the May Fourth era that it had been a shameful history of "fistfights among various vying schools, big and small." As a result, he noted, competing schools of artists had left behind only a record of their "trying to monopolize educational institutions, seeking to carve up the cultural field, and striving to extract money from students of art." The vast wasteland of art, in Xu's view, had collected nothing but incomprehensible titles and mysterious drawings, reckless compositions and wriggling colors, and extremely individualistic jottings that simply escaped the majority of viewers. The mission of the new fine arts movement, he vowed, was to articulate a proletarian class consciousness.

His call to artists laid out the movement's general principles: we must resolutely resist the art policy of the ruling class; we must overcome their art theory by means of dialectical materialism; we must strengthen our own movement and produce artwork superior to theirs; we must acknowledge the relationship between art and life; and we must complete the enlightenment in fine arts that was left unfinished by the ruling class.<sup>91</sup>

In a subsequent article that was more comprehensive and balanced, "The Prospect of the Fine Arts Movement in China," Xu Xingzhi acknowledged that the May Fourth era had been a time when increased demand for mass-produced artwork could no longer be satisfied with traditional means.<sup>92</sup> It was an age of enlightenment because numerous art schools had been created, art shows and exhibitions had been organized, and art journals and newspaper supplements had been published, and it had witnessed the growing popularity of landscape watercolors and still-life studies among art students. The current stage of the art movement, according to Xu's historical narrative, had arrived with the establishment of the Nanjing government, which he viewed as the result of a national revolution betrayed by the Nationalists. As the right-wing Nanjing government came into power, he noted, Liu Haisu, who had heroically defended bourgeois values in his prolonged legal battle over the use of nude models, had turned into a ruthless suppressor of revolutionary students at his Shanghai Meizhuan. Such had also been the fate of Lin Fengmian and his cohort at the National Art Academy: as a beneficiary of the national bourgeoisie, accused Xu Xingzhi, Lin Fengmian would not hesitate to send many revolutionary youths to prison. To Xu Xingzhi, the emblematic art event under the new political regime was the *National Fine Arts Exhibition* of 1929, "evidently an instance of the bourgeoisie's policy to poison the young people." Finally, he stated, a deplorable lack of substance characterized contemporary works of art. Only a "beautiful shell" remained in Lin Fengmian's religious paintings, in Xu Beihong's competent realism, and in "the indiscriminate imitation of Western techniques" found in the works of Ding Yanyong and Chen Baoyi.

Its uncompromising political readings aside, Xu Xingzhi's account was one of the earliest attempts to narrate the cultural, institutional, and even stylistic histories of modern art. His conclusion was that the inception of a new fine arts movement would mirror the arrival of a proletarian revolution as well as a new cultural movement. He traced the new cultural movement to the revolutionary literature debate in early 1928 and regarded recent developments among theater groups, in particular the left turn announced by the Southern Society headed by Tian Han, as further evidence of how widespread the movement had become. For a promising direction in the field of visual arts, Xu Xingzhi pointed to the Epoch Fine Arts Society and referred to its manifesto as a document that expressed a keen awareness of "art as a weapon for class struggle."

Xu Xingzhi singled out the Epoch Fine Arts Society for good reason: he was one of its key organizers. The society was formed at the China College of Art in February 1930, and in March *The Pioneer* reported on the group, published its manifesto, and hailed it as "the first association for proletarian fine arts in China." One of the first events organized by the



society was to invite Lu Xun to give a lecture at the China College of Art. Following that, the society drew on Lu Xun's personal collection to present an exhibition of revolutionary graphic art from the Soviet Union in a bookstore near campus, where copies of the Epoch Fine Arts Society's manifesto were distributed.<sup>93</sup>

The manifesto struck a defiantly antiestablishment tone by evoking a general class struggle. Addressing young artists of the country, it announced that the mandate of the society was to fight for their freedom and their future. Young artists were entreated to see through the deception practiced by established, "mammonist painters." Furthermore, they were presented with a political choice: either to join the rising new class or to follow the decaying old class. Young artists should be the vanguard of the times, the manifesto urged, and their artwork should speak to the contemporary masses. The authors of the manifesto insisted that the new fine arts movement would not repeat the entrenched rivalry between various schools (as the Art Movement Society had also vouched in its May 1929 statement). They justified their radical antiestablishmentarianism with the claim that a new political reality demanded a new mode of artistic production.<sup>94</sup> The "permanent spiritual contribution to society at large" that the Art Movement Society sought to make was not an objective shared by the Epoch Fine Arts Society, the manifesto explained, because society itself had now become the object of change.

Xu Xingzhi clearly understood that the first step toward a new art movement was to change the existing order and institutions of art: the project of using art as an effective weapon in social revolution demanded a different practice of making, exhibiting, and viewing works of art. He therefore saw much promise in the fledgling Cartoon Society, formed under the aegis of the Zuolian, which took drawings directly to the street and therefore had, in effect, a public exhibition every day. The ultimate task of the new art was to "express the *Ideologie* of revolutionary struggle by the rising class," by which Xu meant the industrial working class. Furthermore, he asserted that artists of the new movement should participate in the struggle of the working class and seek to convey workers' consciousness and condition of existence through "a powerful realist technique."<sup>95</sup> More generally, he described the artist's role as mobilizing and educating workers and fortifying their revolutionary will, as well as raising their standard of culture.<sup>96</sup>

Virtually all the pivotal and thorny issues about the making of a revolutionary mass culture in general and a political visual art in particular were touched upon in "The Prospect of the Fine Arts Movement in China."<sup>97</sup> There was evident resonance with the discussion of a revolutionary literature, and the key concept in Xu Xingzhi's description of a new visual art was still *biaoxian*, which, as we have seen, had acquired great critical versatility in contemporary theoretical discourse. Together, Xu Xingzhi's two articles represented a concrete effort to carry out the "legitimate intrusion into art history by the proletariat" that the Creation Society had called for in late 1928. They would also serve as the theoretical platform of the League of Left-Wing Artists, formed in the summer of 1930.

Besides the Epoch Fine Arts Society and the Cartoon Society, Xu Xingzhi also identified the Eighteen Art Society as a promising group in the proletarian fine arts movement. In April 1930, he took a group of students from the China College of Art on a sketching tour of West Lake. During the trip, which apparently caused as serious alarm to the National Art Academy's administration as had the Southern Art Institute's expedition in 1928, Xu met with more than twenty members of the Eighteen Art Society off campus. Hu Yichuan (1910–2000), a first-year student at the National Art Academy, facilitated and presided over the meeting.<sup>98</sup> Xu informed those present of a summer seminar being organized by the Zuolian, and he also introduced the idea of forming an association of left-wing artists. In a highly symbolic *dénouement*, at least in Xu Xingzhi's later recollection, the group was dispersed by a spring thunderstorm gathering on the horizon.<sup>99</sup>

In early summer 1930, Hu Yichuan, his girlfriend Xia Peng (1911–1935), and two other students from the Hangzhou National Art Academy (now technically downgraded to an art college<sup>100</sup>) arrived in Shanghai to attend the literary seminar organized by the Zuolian. Probably in July, Hu Yichuan and Xia Peng represented the Eighteen Art Society at a meeting that created the League of Left-Wing Artists (the Meilian) with the Epoch Fine Arts Society as its organizational core.<sup>101</sup> The league was made up of art students from the Meizhuan, the New China Art College, the Shanghai Art College, the White Goose Painting Society—all based in Shanghai—and the Eighteen Art Society from Hangzhou. Yu Hai, who after being expelled from the Hangzhou National Art Academy had found his way to Shanghai, was appointed secretary of the Meilian and its liaison to the supervising Zuolian. In October 1930, the Meilian joined the General Alliance of the Left-Wing Cultural Field in China, together with sister associations of left-wing playwrights, social scientists, composers, journalists, and filmmakers. By itself, however, the Meilian never managed to become the central organization of left-wing artists that it was intended to be, in part because its function and relevance were continually supplanted by the many art societies and studios that kept appearing.

The flurry of organizational activities and calls for a new art movement had a noticeable impact on a show presented by the Eighteen Art Society in Shanghai in early summer 1931. As one of the main organizers of the exhibition, Hu Yichuan would find in Lu Xun not only an enthusiastic supporter of what the Eighteen Art Society stood for, but also an appreciative viewer of the few experimental woodblock prints that he had made. In a brief introduction for the exhibition catalogue, Lu Xun endorsed the Eighteen Art Society as representing an art that was "new, youthful, and progressive." For Lu Xun, the exhibition probably signified an extended network of young artists, because he had been in contact with a group in Shanghai that was also called the Eighteen Art Society. The Shanghai Eighteen Art Society, or Eighteen Art Research Institute, had been formed in the spring of 1931 by several of those expelled from the Hangzhou National Art Academy, among them Chen Zhuokun and Chen Tiegeng. Through Yu Hai, secretary of the Meilian, they had contacted

Jiang Feng (1910–1982) of the White Goose Painting Society and had found that they had much in common.<sup>102</sup> With two rented rooms as a studio, this group of art students decided to organize a research institute, naming it after the Eighteen Art Society in Hangzhou, and it soon became a member of the Meilian. The individual who supervised the Meilian on behalf of the General Alliance of the Left-Wing Cultural Field was Feng Xuefeng, a close associate of Lu Xun since 1929. Through Feng, Lu Xun learned about the Eighteen Art Society and its interest in making woodblock prints.<sup>103</sup> When approached by Chen Zhuokun in May, Lu Xun readily agreed to write an introduction to an exhibition by the Eighteen Art Society.<sup>104</sup> (Apparently, requests also came from Hangzhou, with photographs of items to be exhibited.<sup>105</sup>) In the end, Lu Xun, with his friend Uchiyama Kanzō as the intermediary, helped the young organizers rent the second floor of the Japanese *Daily News* headquarters in Little Tokyo as the exhibition site.<sup>106</sup> However, as the title of the show suggested that it was an academic-achievement exhibition by the Eighteen Art Society of the Hangzhou National Art Academy, the Shanghai group decided not to participate.<sup>107</sup>

Word of the Eighteen Art Society's upcoming exhibition got out as early as April through *Literary and Artistic News*, a left-leaning weekly that started publishing in the middle of March 1931. Yu Hai was the journal's art editor.<sup>108</sup> On June 1, reporting that the exhibition was to open in two days, the weekly also briefly introduced the history of the group and attributed its internal division to the new movement in literature and art. A week later, the weekly explained that financial difficulties had made it necessary to postpone the exhibition to June 11. Finally, on June 15, it informed its readers that the well-attended show had lasted three days and displayed more than 180 pieces, including woodblock prints, an artistic medium that "up till now has never been exhibited by other art groups in China."<sup>109</sup> The same issue featured Lu Xun's introduction from the exhibition catalogue as the lead article. As a graphic accompaniment to the text, a woodcut titled *Traveling Wheels* by Hu Yichuan was reproduced, and an unmistakable graphic link was thereby made between the "youthful and progressive" art that Lu Xun endorsed in his article and the woodblock print.

Before the opening of the exhibition, the administration of the Hangzhou National Art Academy, unhappy with the gist of Lu Xun's writing, had summoned Ji Chundan (author of the Eighteen Art Society's self-introduction) and demanded that the one-page text by Lu Xun be removed from the catalogue.<sup>110</sup> Ignoring the order, the group went ahead as planned. (Such insubordination would no doubt contribute to the Eighteen Art Society being altogether disbanded on campus later in 1931.<sup>111</sup>) What Lin Fengmian and his colleagues found objectionable about Lu Xun's introduction was his rejection of the humanist idea of a universal art. In a divided society, Lu Xun wrote, there was no such thing as an "art for humanity," and art could hardly escape being simultaneously denounced and embraced by opposing sides. More insulting to Lin Fengmian, perhaps, was Lu Xun's assessment that "in contemporary China there really isn't anyone worthy of the title of artist." So-called artists, he claimed, earned their reputation not so much through art as through pretensions; by comparison, the young, obscure members of the Eighteen Art Society demonstrated a "clear con-



17 Hu Yichuan, *The Hungry*, 1931, woodcut.

sciousness and resolute endeavor."<sup>112</sup> Indeed, his confidence rested less on any specific works included in the society's exhibition—most of which were exercises in nudes, portraits, still lifes, and landscape sketches in various mediums—than on the youthful adventurousness these artists seemed to exude.

What distinguished this particular exhibition from the many art shows presented by art societies during this period was the handful of woodblock prints made by Hu Yichuan and Wang Zhanfei (1911–). Both artists used the new artistic medium to place human figures in a visual narrative. Hu Yichuan's depictions of starving, imprisoned, or displaced people were perhaps less detailed than the technically competent drawings of sculptural or human models (mostly nudes) included in the exhibition, but his use of the woodcut to tell human tales led to a more dynamic and complex composition. His figures appear despondent, overwhelmed by an alien social environment. This expanded view of the world beyond the studio may have been motivated by a changed conception of art; it may also have been compelled by the formal capacities of the new medium. The busy, crisscrossed white lines that form the backdrop to *The Hungry*, for instance, convey the weight of a tightly knit net cast over a distraught family of three (fig. 17). In *Displacement*, the vertical lines of an enclosing railing, backed by distant urban buildings, constitute a solid, imperious boundary that stands in sharp contrast to the diagonally incised foreground. The sense of motion and



transition achieved through the composition and through variations in the line further deepens the despair of the family, who, thrown into this unsettling landscape, has no choice but to trudge on.

A markedly different style and story may be found in the sole woodblock print submitted by Wang Zhanfei (fig. 18). With white outlines and contours faintly sketched in, the predominantly dark image is symbolic in intention and melancholic in effect. Around the central kneeling figure, whose unkempt long hair and praying gesture suggest a grieving soul, the careful viewer might detect in the darkness the phosphorescent shapes of a cross, distant mountains, severed human heads, flowers, grass, raised arms, and an agitated but silent crowd. Towering over the praying figure is a range of lifeless, closely packed human bodies, which occupy close to half of the entire print and form a virtual monument against feeble but radiating beams of sunlight. Simply titled *Woodcut* for the exhibition, this macabre but richly detailed work touched an emotional chord among artists and writers associated with the Zuolian. As its later titles would reveal, Wang Zhanfei engraved the image to express his admiration for and solidarity with the five Zuolian members, among them Rou Shi, who were executed by the Nationalist police in February 1931.<sup>113</sup> News of the massacre had been strictly suppressed, and the story was first broken by *Literary and Artistic News* on March 30, with information provided by Feng Xuefeng.<sup>114</sup> Throughout the year, details of the executions would gradually leak out, igniting a series of protests in Shanghai and abroad. By November, for instance, more than a hundred outraged American writers voiced their protest to the Chinese embassy in Washington, DC.<sup>115</sup>

The two *Literary and Artistic News* reviews of the June 1931 exhibition, however, did not directly comment on Wang Zhanfei's politically resonant print. In expounding on how an artist ought to see and represent the world, Yu Hai mentioned several works representing members of the working class, but criticized them for creating a pastoral landscape in which "the most suitable for hard labor" apparently were contented with their fate. Such a projection of contentment, he warned, was a distortion of reality and might help foreclose the destiny of the poor. He urged artists to present laborers who were aware of their unbearable situation and ready to take action against it.<sup>116</sup> In comparison, Yu Hai observed that the woodcuts by Hu Yichuan were more effective in revealing an oppressive social reality. Not fully convinced that the visual appeal of black-and-white prints would be any greater than that of oils, however, he also worried that this medium might easily give way to a frivolous decorative style.

Yu Hai's concern would seem unwarranted. In the confines of an exhibition space, a woodcut might be less striking visually than a large oil painting, but outside that artificial context the black-and-white print proved to be far more versatile and potent. Moreover, the few woodcuts in the Eighteen Art Society's exhibition initiated two themes that would come to be associated with the new artistic medium: on the one hand, the aspiration toward a visual ethnography in compassionate representations of poverty and its ruinous effects; on the other, left-wing political activism. Another important tradition established in the exhibition was



18 Wang Zhanfei, *Woodcut*, 1931, woodcut.

the young printmakers' total disregard for commercial considerations, such as numbering a limited edition or authenticating every print.

The exhibition certainly generated great interest in the woodblock print among members of the Eighteen Art Society based in Shanghai, several of whom bought engraving knives and switched from oil painting to printmaking.<sup>117</sup> They consulted a collection of linocut illustrations that the German artist Carl Meffert (1903–1988) had made for the Soviet novel *Cement*, which Lu Xun had made available in a fine reproduction in early 1931. What drew them to this collection was not only its dramatic visual idiom, but also its refreshing depictions of industrial landscapes and workers in a style that Lu Xun described as "bold and

unrestrained."<sup>118</sup> By August, the partisan *Literary and Artistic News* reported that efforts by the young printmakers had the support of "Lu Xun, the promoter of woodcuts," and that plans had been made to introduce more down-and-out art students to the inexpensive medium.<sup>119</sup> Within a week, the journal published a woodcut by Chen Tiegeng; clearly indebted to Meffert in style, it depicted a group of demonstrators being clubbed down by British police and their Indian deputies.

As the woodcut began to attract young art students as an expressive, international, and oppositional artistic medium, Lu Xun made a historic intervention in August 1931 that brought even greater momentum to the nascent woodcut movement. Upon meeting Uchiyama Kakichi (1900–1984), younger brother of the owner of the Uchiyama Bookstore and a primary school art teacher from Japan, Lu Xun invited him to teach an introductory class on woodcuts to some art students in town.<sup>120</sup> The person Lu Xun entrusted with the task of organizing the workshop was Feng Xuefeng, who contacted Yu Hai of the Meilian, who in turn notified Jiang Feng of the Shanghai Eighteen Art Society.<sup>121</sup> On August 17, thirteen young men (representing the Shanghai Eighteen Art Society, the Shanghai Meizhuan, the Shanghai Art College, and the White Goose Painting Society) showed up at a Japanese language school to which Lu Xun had secured access. No one from Hangzhou was present, nor had anyone there been informed.<sup>122</sup> Lu Xun introduced the younger Uchiyama to those present and went on to serve as a patient interpreter. He would play the same role for the next five mornings, during which time Kakachi demonstrated basic techniques, commented on various types of prints, and assigned regular homework. On several occasions, to aid Kakachi's instructions, Lu Xun brought to the workshop his collection of traditional Japanese *ukiyo-e* color prints, modern *sōsaku-hanga* prints, and British wood engravings. However, he was most proud to show the *War* series by Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) of 1922–23, which he had purchased directly from the artist with the help of the American journalist Agnes Smedley. (A "freelance revolutionary operating on a global scale," Smedley had arrived in China in 1928 as a reporter for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and conducted an interview with Lu Xun on December 1929.<sup>123</sup> During 1930, she contributed articles to her German newspaper and left-wing journals in the United States, such as *Modern Review* and *New Masses*, to introduce political and literary developments in China. She also published an essay on the Chinese countryside in *Germination*, edited by Lu Xun.)

When the workshop came to an end, Lu Xun presented six Kollwitz prints to Kakachi as a gift. The instructor also kept fifteen prints by eight of the students as a souvenir. Among these tentative exercises was a portrait of Lu Xun by Chen Zhuokun, most likely the first print in what would become a cherished tradition for generations of Chinese woodcut artists wishing to celebrate the medium's early champion (fig. 19). On the final day of the workshop, the participants decided to have a group picture taken. For this special moment, several students changed into more formal Western jackets, while Lu Xun still wore the same white gown in which he had opened the workshop (fig. 20).



19 Chen Zhuokun, *Portrait of Lu Xun*, 1931, woodcut.



20 Participants in the woodcut workshop led by Uchiyama Kakichi in Shanghai in August 1931.



Less than a month later, Kollwitz's *Sacrifice*, the first print in her *War* series, appeared in a new journal, *The Big Dipper*. Edited by Ding Ling (1904–1986), whose husband was among the young writers executed by the Nationalist police in February, the journal was funded by the Zuolian. To express his outrage at the massacre and to offer a “wordless memory” of his young friend Rou Shi, Lu Xun had sent in a copy of the Kollwitz print to be used as a visual statement in the new journal.<sup>124</sup> He also attached a brief note, in which he paraphrased the German art critic Otto Nagel (1894–1967), remarking on a “powerful, all-encompassing maternal quality” in Kollwitz's work.<sup>125</sup> This would be the first publication of a Kollwitz print in China, and she would ever after be firmly associated with the cause of the left-wing movement. She would also provide inspiration to the first generation of modern Chinese woodcut artists.

Among the participants in the August workshop, Jiang Feng, Chen Zhuokun, and Chen Tiegeng would all play a crucial role in the new woodcut movement. Much more confident after the workshop, they immediately formed the Modern Woodcut Research Society and sought to raise money in support of their projects, one of them being to purchase books on woodcuts directly from Germany. In a fund-raising notice, the society promoted woodcuts on socioeconomic and aesthetic grounds. Young Chinese artists had turned to this new medium, it stated, because materials for oil painting were prohibitively expensive. A woodblock print, by contrast, contained “elements best suited for creating powerful artwork, which is what a poor young artist looks for.” The fund-raising effort was made public in *Literary and Artistic News*, which announced that the notice of the Modern Woodcut Research Society amounted to a “formal mobilization for the print (*banhua*) movement in China.” In describing the movement as one that used a knife in place of a brush, the report also voiced a militant defiance.<sup>126</sup>

The article in *Literary and Artistic News* was the first to name the print movement as such. Less than two months later, the weekly reported that the Modern Woodcut Research Society had created more than a hundred prints and would publish a selection, interlaced with poems and short stories. It also indicated that a public exhibition would soon follow.<sup>127</sup> Yet neither the exhibition nor the publication materialized as planned. Instead, several other woodcut societies and publications emerged. The movement had indeed begun and was in fact unstoppable. But it did not take the grand form hoped for by the cheering reporter of *Literary and Artistic News*, nor would it be confined to the art students and art groups gathered in Shanghai.

In April 1933, Lu Xun wrote to Uchiyama Kakichi in Japan, informing his young friend that half of those who had attended the workshop were out of touch and the other half had ended up in prison.<sup>128</sup> This distressing situation reflected the hardship faced by young woodcut artists. It is also true, however, that the new artistic medium was gaining broader recognition, and a vibrant woodcut movement was rapidly developing in major cities across the nation.





## 4

### The Making of the Avant-Garde

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Of all media, wood-engraving is the one in which there is the least to be taught and the most to be learnt. The principle of the modern woodcut is that of a white chalk drawing on a blackboard. . . . Every cut made on a wood block prints white, so that one is always working up from the black towards the light.

CLARE LEIGHTON, *Wood-Engraving and Woodcuts*, 1932

Little did Lu Xun suspect, on the evening of January 28, 1932, that the noisy commotion he had heard in his neighborhood earlier that afternoon had signaled a devastating turn of events. Directly north of his Ramos apartment building, which was within Little Tokyo in the International Settlement, stood the headquarters of the Japanese navy's landing forces. Around 11:00 P.M., eight armored trucks escorting about one thousand marines rolled out from the headquarters compound, turned west, and crossed the Settlement boundary. Upon entering Zhabei, a district of greater Shanghai under Chinese jurisdiction, the Japanese marines engaged the Chinese military police, who were enforcing martial law. A fierce gun battle erupted in the darkened, narrow streets, and the historic first Shanghai war was under way.<sup>1</sup> Frightened by the blinding flares and whistling bullets, Lu Xun and his wife, Xu Guangping, withdrew to the living room downstairs, only to find a bullet hole next to his writing desk.<sup>2</sup>

As the fighting extended into the early hours of the next morning, Japanese navy bombers from a seaplane carrier outside Shanghai attacked Zhabei, thereby initiating into world history the horror of systematic aerial bombing of civilian targets. The first major casualty of the incendiary bombs was the magnificent North Station, then the most modern railway hub in the region and proudly regarded as a symbol of China's industrialization drive. A few hours later, the sophisticated printing house of the Commercial Press and the adjacent Ori-



ental Library were also hit and started to burn. The conflagration lasted throughout the day, causing the ashes of freshly printed material and antique books to be blown over a radius of several miles.<sup>3</sup> Back on the top floor of his apartment, Lu Xun watched helplessly as the raging fire consumed the press that had prepared a zinc plate of a woodblock print by the Soviet artist Nikolai Piskarev (1892–1959). He had received the original print from the artist himself and was going to reproduce it for broad circulation in China.<sup>4</sup> As air and sea bombardment by the Japanese continued and expanded in the following weeks, countless shops and housing units (eighty percent of the total number of residences in the war zone), a large number of textile mills and factories, and more than two hundred school, college, and university buildings (among them most of the local art schools) were either reduced to rubble or severely damaged. The catastrophe would eventually claim more than six thousand civilian lives and displace more than 814,000 people.<sup>5</sup>

Flaunting its far superior military power as well as its readiness to inflict destruction on China was only part of the objective of the Japanese navy at this point, however. As both contemporary commentators and future historians would agree, the Japanese navy's provocation of military conflict was part of a larger strategic design on the part of an expansionist military machine: the primary objective was to instigate hostility in Shanghai so that the Japanese Kantō Army's ambitions in northeast China would not attract further attention.<sup>6</sup> Ever since the Kantō Army's takeover of Manchuria on September 18, 1931, a popular movement against Japanese aggression had escalated and gained broad support across China. In the city of Shanghai, the crisis in Manchuria had further fueled a general boycott of Japanese products that, beginning in July 1931, had followed riots against Chinese residents in Korean cities under Japanese colonial rule.<sup>7</sup>

The gravely strained relationship between Japanese nationals and the Chinese public during this period had little impact on the extraordinary friendship between Lu Xun and Uchiyama Kanzō. After the shooting started on January 28, Uchiyama became concerned about the vengeful Japanese reservists (known as *rōnin*) and marines, and insisted that Lu Xun and his family move to his place for safety. On the sealed second floor of the Uchiyama Bookstore, the refugees were cooped up for a week before they could move to the neutral British section of the International Settlement, thereby joining the mass exodus of an estimated 230,000 civilians from the war zone.

The stiff resistance put up by the Chinese military initially came from the Nineteenth Route Army. Its chief commanders were General Jiang Guangnai (1888–1967) and General Cai Tingkai (1892–1968), both of whom were loyal to the Cantonese faction of the Nationalist Party and critical of the appeasement policy adopted by Chiang Kai-shek toward Japan.<sup>8</sup> After the war broke out, commanders of the Nineteenth Route Army issued a public statement declaring their resolution to resist.<sup>9</sup> True to its bestirring rhetoric, the Nineteenth Route Army mounted a spirited defense, and its stunning victories in the opening phase of the confrontation would galvanize public support. One day into the war, *Shun Pao* was the first to publish an editorial endorsing the Chinese troops' self-defense. Two more *Shun Pao* com-

mentaries on the following days hailed the Nineteenth Route Army as "an army of the nation" and called for a nationwide mobilization.<sup>10</sup> Across the country, numerous newspaper editorials and proclamations echoed the rallying cry, and thousands of supporting letters and telegrams would stream to the Nineteenth Route Army field headquarters. Cheered as the first modern Chinese army ever actively to confront foreign aggression, officers and soldiers of the Nineteenth Route Army, especially Generals Jiang and Cai, were lionized as patriotic heroes. "A profound impression upon the Chinese morale" was evident even to members of the League of Nations inquiry commission that had just been assembled to investigate the Manchurian Incident: "The feeling prevailed that China must be saved by her own efforts. The Sino-Japanese conflict was brought home to the people throughout China. Everywhere opinion hardened and the spirit of resistance increased. Former pessimism gave place to equally exaggerated optimism."<sup>11</sup>

In Shanghai, the war in its backyard electrified the metropolis as nothing before. A host of associations, societies, unions, and guilds organized donation drives and provided much-needed material support for troops of the Nineteenth Route Army, whose standard protective gear was an unwieldy bamboo hat. (The inadequate equipment of the Chinese army drew only derision from the fully mechanized Japanese military.) The general mobilization allowed members of the left-wing cultural forces to play a particularly active role during this period. To comfort and entertain wounded soldiers, for instance, Tian Han would take a team of actors and musicians to makeshift hospitals. To provide daily news coverage of the unfolding war, Xia Yan, Qian Xingcun, Ding Ling, and Lou Shiye (1905–2001) would file uplifting stories and interviews from the battlefield. Their emotional journalistic reports came to be viewed as a refreshing and expedient literary form. On April 5, 1932, Qian Xingcun (under the name A Ying) published a collection called *The Shanghai Incident and Reportage*, in which he described reportage as a form of modern print media "endowed with infinite capacity for exhortation."<sup>12</sup> One of the numerous foreign journalists covering the war was Agnes Smedley, who fully identified with the Nineteenth Route Army and the cause of resistance.

The horrendous spectacle of urban warfare also presented crews from the struggling native film industry in Shanghai with fresh subject matter. Based on news footage recording both the aftermath of the attack and the heroic actions of the Nineteenth Route Army, several documentaries of the first Shanghai war were quickly released and enthusiastically received, both in China and overseas. The box-office success of these films led the heads of major studios such as Star, Lianhua, and Tianyi to perceive a new public mood and potential market, which in turn would pave the way for left-wing critics and playwrights to enter and begin reshaping the film industry in the second half of 1932.<sup>13</sup> Just as extraordinary was the abundance of photographs taken during this period, in part due to "the anomaly of the International Settlement," as Parks Coble observes, which restricted the Chinese troops to a disadvantageous defensive position but allowed journalists and photographers privileged access to the battlefield.<sup>14</sup> Pictures of battle scenes, of terrified refugees and wounded

soldiers, of aerial bombardment and burning wreckage would promptly appear in daily newspapers, pictorials, and special publications. The monochromatic photographs quickly became an indispensable index to the contemporary Chinese accounts and analyses of the event. One of the earliest histories of the war was published in early March and featured thirteen photographs.<sup>15</sup> A more comprehensive history would advertise prominently its forty-six images selected from "battlefield photography" that, aided by an enlarged map of the battle zone, would allow readers both to experience the war vicariously and to have a commanding view.<sup>16</sup> By the end of 1932, at least three more illustrated volumes on the war were published. The first Shanghai war thus was arguably the first comprehensively photographed war in modern Chinese history.

Other visual arts could hardly compete with photography as an instantaneous, mass-reproducible means of graphic representation, and the responses of many artists were determined by the formal and generic conventions of their chosen mediums. Shortly before the war broke out, an exhibition of traditional *guohua* painting and calligraphy had taken place at the Clubhouse for Ningbo Natives to raise money for the resistance movement in Manchuria as well as in Shanghai.<sup>17</sup> In February, members of the Eighteen Art Society in Shanghai created a pictorial of cartoons to exhort the Nineteenth Route Army and call for a national resistance movement.<sup>18</sup> Also during the military conflict, Jiang Zhaohe (1904–1986), a self-taught portrait artist, visited the front line to paint oil portraits of Jiang Guangnai and Cai Tingkai for public display and circulation. These portraits were reproduced in large quantities, proudly displayed, and acquired an iconographic aura at the time. Wang Jiyuan chose to depict poignant war-torn landscapes in the traditional medium of ink and brush, exhibiting his sketches in July 1932. Around the same time, Zhu Qizhan displayed at the New China Art College (the Yizhuan) dozens of oil paintings from his extended tour of the battleground.<sup>19</sup> Xu Beihong resorted to symbolism, creating an ink painting of a crowing rooster, thereby further developing a subject that had first entered his repertoire in early 1928.

The first Shanghai war would also have a formative and lasting impact on the nascent woodcut movement. A significant number of woodblock prints were made as the visual equivalent of engaged reportage—which, as A Ying observed, was believed to be more potent than a mechanical representation of reality.<sup>20</sup> The war not only interjected pressing subject matter for graphic representation, but it also helped to clarify a public cause for the young woodcut artists and to identify their intended mass audience. Moreover, efforts by the artists to explore the emotional impact of the war greatly expanded their visual vocabulary and showed the woodcut to be an incomparably expressive and expedient medium. As black-and-white prints provided a rich and moving visual record of the crisis-ridden age, the woodcut movement as a whole assumed a different relationship to contemporary events than did other art movements: it began to emerge as a self-consciously avant-garde movement with a political impact.

## FROM THE ASHES OF THE FIRST SHANGHAI WAR

Just as the causes of the first Shanghai war were complex, so too were the factors that brought it to a quick conclusion. Soon after the Japanese military began a massive bombing campaign in late February, the Nineteenth Route Army was forced to withdraw to a second line of defense. On March 3, the League of Nations brokered a cease-fire. A victory parade by the Japanese in Shanghai's Little Tokyo in late April was badly disrupted when a Korean patriot detonated a bomb, killing the general who conducted the final stages of the Japanese offensive.<sup>21</sup>

In Shanghai's devastated Jiangwan district were the remains of the building that had once housed the Eighteen Art Research Institute, which subsequently ceased to exist. In an effort to jump-start the left-wing cultural movement in shell-shocked Shanghai, Tian Han, as a representative of the General Alliance of the Left-Wing Cultural Field in China, called a meeting of available members of the Meilian in early April. The resolution adopted by those present was that the broad anti-imperialist movement and the current movement against Japanese aggression both demanded a "revolutionary fine arts movement of the masses," and that the first priority was to resurrect the Meilian by forming an art society.<sup>22</sup>

On May 1, a new literary magazine made a welcome entrance in the Shanghai publishing world, which was still struggling to recover from the war. Named *Modern Age*, it also carried on its cover a French title, *Les contemporains*. It was put out by the Modern Press, which had regarded itself a competitor with the now severely damaged Commercial Press. A few years before, at the height of the revolutionary literature movement, the Modern Press had published left-leaning journals such as *Modern Fiction*, *The Pioneer*, and the outright leftist *Public Literature*. The editor in chief of the new monthly was Shi Zhecun, a talented writer critically acclaimed for his psychoanalytical fiction as well as for his New Sensationist tales about urban life.<sup>23</sup> Shi Zhecun was also an experienced editor on good terms with many writers and potential contributors from various camps.<sup>24</sup> When *Modern Age* arrived on the scene, few literary magazines remained in the once-overcrowded field of periodical publications. (The venerable *Short Story Magazine*, for example, had ceased publication the previous December.<sup>25</sup>) All of these factors contributed to the immediate success of the new journal, which would have a three-year run. The first issue went into a second printing of two thousand copies within five days and "catapulted [Shi] to instant fame on Shanghai's literary scene."<sup>26</sup>

Besides being a literary journal that supported formal innovations and intellectual diversity, *Modern Age* maintained a close interest in contemporary visual arts. In its first issue, Shi Zhecun published a eulogy on a little-known but dedicated artist, Hong Ye (1886–1932), honored as a "master of painting" in Shi Zhecun's moving account. Hong Ye had training in both Chinese and Western painting, taught at the Shanghai Meizhuan and other art schools to support his family, and always sought, even late in his career, to break new ground, according to Shi Zhecun. Several of Hong Ye's works, including an innovative Chinese paint-



ing *Dusk*, had been included in the first *National Fine Arts Exhibition* in 1929, and a flower-and-bird scroll by Hong Ye had been reproduced in *Short Story Magazine* in November 1926 as an example of work included in a recent China College of Art exhibition. Inspired by the new theories advocating a socially conscious and purposeful art, however, Hong Ye then made a radical change in his work, turning away from images of quaint bridges and desolate woods to scenes depicting laboring peasants and abused workers. Shi Zhecun reported that the artist was pleased that his paintings no longer decorated the walls of bourgeois studies: "He lived in poverty and painted in loneliness people for whom he had sympathy—until his own death." In Hong Ye's life and death, Shi Zhecun saw an admirable personal integrity and confessed that he could understand, but not accept, his friend's later pursuits.<sup>27</sup>

Shi Zhecun's reminiscences of Hong Ye highlighted an array of structural hardships that confronted many older artists, especially those trained in traditional ink-and-brush painting. With the steady erosion of the landed gentry literati, few of them could claim financial self-sufficiency or count on time-honored forms of patronage. Their lack of modern or foreign credentials brought them little support from government institutions or appreciable commercial success. In search of a livelihood, they were drawn to Shanghai, but the difficulty of making a living there often drove them out again. Their travail was often compounded by a growing dissatisfaction with, or unpopularity of, the artistic medium they had mastered through years of apprenticeship. Belatedly, they began to experiment and strive for a compromise or blending of two disparate visual mediums and forms. In their efforts to reorient themselves, they realized their own destitute situation and gravitated toward arguments for an art with an explicitly social content. They would embrace new subject matter and see value in portraying strained human figures as social commentary. As a result, their paintings would become more representational, or more "realistic," the term used by Shi Zhecun in describing his first impression of Hong Ye's depictions of a flower vendor and road workers.

Almost all the difficulties that besieged Hong Ye were addressed by the Spring Field Painting Society, formed with the backing of the Meilian in May 1932. Headquartered in the French Concession and close to the prestigious Shanghai Meizhuan, the new art group drew on members of the former Shanghai Eighteen Art Research Institute, a number of whom, such as Jiang Feng and Huang Shanding (1910–1996), had participated in the August 1931 printmaking workshop initiated by Lu Xun. It also included Ji Chundan, who had recently been expelled by the Hangzhou National Art Academy, and Ai Qing (1910–1996), who had returned from France as an art student in January 1932 but was more passionate about Walt Whitman and modern free verse. It was Ai Qing who gave the new art society its hopeful name.

On several key issues, the mission statement of the Spring Field Painting Society harked back to the 1930 manifesto of the Epoch Fine Arts Society. Art, the Spring Field painters argued, must move forward along with historical progress, "serve the new society, and become a powerful instrument in educating, informing, and organizing the masses." What Chinese artists had produced so far, they claimed, were "empty, decadent, and hedonist works" catering to the taste of a few. Furthermore, spurious art schools had misled young students and



21 Hu Yichuan, *A Scene in Zhabei*, 1932, woodcut.

deluded the nation, and the exorbitant fees and tuitions charged by mercenary art schools and "sinners against art" had kept art lovers away from art.<sup>28</sup> The new art movement envisioned by the Spring Field Painting Society therefore contained two fronts: (1) to create an institutional space for starving unrecognized artists; and (2) to foster an "emerging, progressive, realist, and epochal art" that belonged to the vast majority of the people.<sup>29</sup>

A week after the manifesto was published in the partisan weekly *Literary and Artistic News* at the end of May, an example of the "emerging" and "epochal" art it promoted appeared in the second number of *Modern Age* (June 1932). It was a woodblock print titled *A Scene in Zhabei* (fig. 21), by Hu Yichuan, a former member of the now-disbanded Eighteen Art So-

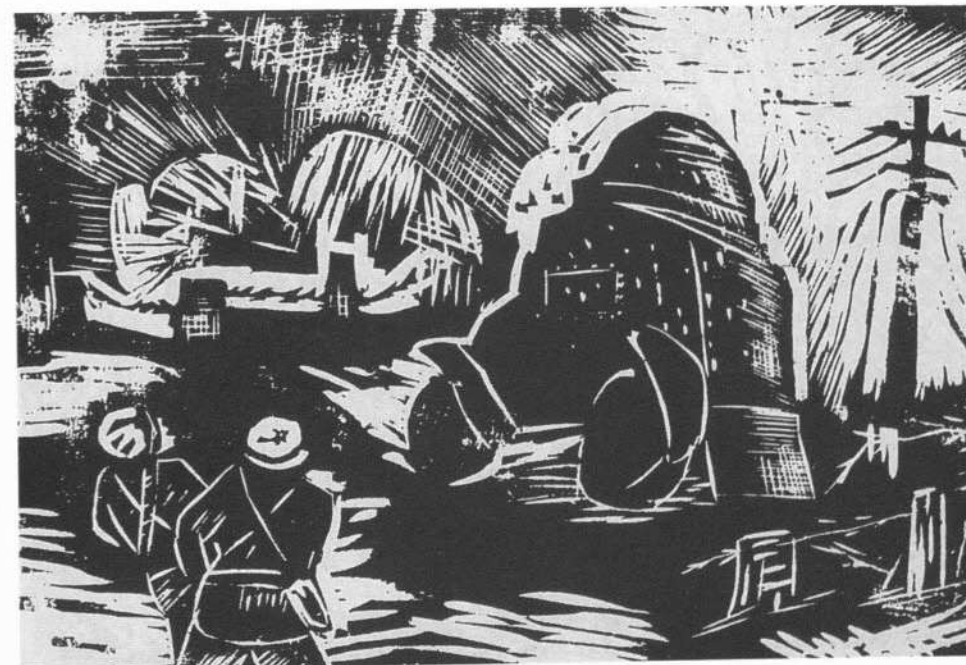
ciety of the Hangzhou National Art Academy.<sup>30</sup> Since June 1931, woodcuts by Hu Yichuan, Chen Tiegeng, and Jiang Feng had appeared periodically in *Literary and Artistic News*.<sup>31</sup> *A Scene in Zhabei*, however, was the first contemporary Chinese woodcut to be published in a mainstream literary journal, a venue that accorded much publicity to the still largely unfamiliar art form. In the following months, many aspiring woodcut artists would submit their works to the journal, which led to the publication, in May 1933, of a special insert called "Selections from Modern Chinese Woodcuts." In charge of the selection was the veteran graphic artist Ye Lingfeng.

Directly referencing the recent bombing by the Japanese military, the black-and-white woodcut *A Scene in Zhabei* presents an urban landscape ravished by war. In it, Hu Yichuan adroitly exploited the expressive capabilities of the medium. Originally printed with a background that is bright orange, the image brings together the brutal elements of a ruinous war and arranges them for an allegorical effect. Against a backdrop of explosions and rising plumes of smoke, lifeless bodies occupy the foreground. Connecting the deafening noise of destruction in the distance and the eerie silence of the dead bodies are the solid architectural columns of a burned-down building. The bare columns and their oblique shadows seem to tell of a violated sanctuary, but their upright position and assertive lines provide an organizing grid against a scene of disarray. Moreover, by signaling an upward movement and the action of mutual support, they suggest a determination and resilience that may overcome destruction and even death.

In comparison with the many news photographs covering the war, Hu Yichuan's *A Scene in Zhabei* stood out for its commanding view of a scene represented with great depth, its layered narrative frame, and its clearly emotional allegiance. Its fundamental motivation was not to offer an indexical reference, as photographic documents were intended to do, but instead to establish an interpretive frame on an overwhelming crisis. The use of bold, straight lines, as well as the overall clarity of the image, suggests an unambivalent take on the situation.

Like a photograph, however, *A Scene in Zhabei* was reproduced as a mass-circulated image, and its illustrative design and effect were amplified rather than compromised in the process.<sup>32</sup> Through its mass reproduction, the image entered an almost tactile visual realm that was contiguous with everyday life. In this aspect, an oil painting or an ink-and-brush landscape could hardly compete with the woodblock print, because the print enabled a more mobile viewing experience. The relationship between the artist and viewer in the case of the mechanically reproduced woodcut was also different from that implied by the canvas or scroll. The reduced effect of Wang Jiyuan's ink-and-brush renditions of the war-torn Zhabei landscape, reproduced in miniature form in the following issue of *Modern Age*, was a pertinent case in point.

The raging war also had a great impact on Liu Xian (1915–1990), a young student at the Shanghai Meizhuan, who made a series of twenty-three prints in 1932 to document the pop-



22 Liu Xian, from *Blood Debt*, 1932, woodcut.

ular resistance against Japanese aggression in Manchuria and Shanghai. Titled *Blood Debt*, the series was based mostly on news photographs and reports of current events. Liu Xian was particularly effective in rendering the explosive confusion of war through rapid and busy knife work, as can be seen in the prints about the fighting in Shanghai (fig. 22). The *Blood Debt* series did not follow a narrative, but constituted an impassioned visual commentary on contemporary history.<sup>33</sup>

In early June 1932, an exhibition of German graphic art opened at the Zeitgeist (Yinghuan) Bookstore, located on Bubbling Well Road in Shanghai. The exhibition was a project that Lu Xun and the German expatriate and Communist agent Ursula Hamburg (alias of Ruth Werner, 1907–2000), whom Lu Xun had met through Agnes Smedley, had been preparing since late 1931. Originally set to open in early December 1931, the event was delayed first by a lack of suitable frames and then by the outbreak of the war. The exhibition featured mostly signed prints by noted printmakers of the twentieth century, including key expressionist figures such as Alexander Archipenko (1887–1964), Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), Max Pechstein (1881–1955), and Ludwig Meidner (1884–1966). In an article about the exhibition published in December 1931, Lu Xun called special attention to works by Käthe Kollwitz, George Grosz (1893–1959), and Carl Meffert, referring to them as "new, fighting artists." He also promised that the large-scale original prints on display would provide visitors to the exhibition with a memorable viewing experience (fig. 23).<sup>34</sup>





23 Carl Meffert, linocut illustration for *Cement* by Fyodor Gladkov, 1928.

In a review of the exhibition, a critic writing for *Literary and Artistic News* singled out a print from Kollwitz's *Peasants' Revolt* series, from the first decade of the century, and her *Weavers on the March* (fig. 24) for praise. Instead of including reproductions of these works, however, the review was accompanied by a woodcut by Zhou Xi (later known as Jiang Feng) that bore a striking resemblance in both composition and mood to the latter of the German artist's prints (plate 4). No title was given to the image, and the artist was identified as belonging to the Spring Field Painting Society. Later known as *Workers on the Wharf*, Jiang Feng's depiction of a row of brawny, despondent laborers also shows the influence of Carl Meffert, especially in the rendition of the industrial background and the facial features of the laborers. Employing an impressive array of gravers and complex incision techniques, Jiang Feng strove for a detailed study of the physique as well as the physiognomy of the industrial working class in this work. Never before had a woodcut artist, or indeed any visual artist, attempted to represent such a large number of contemporary Chinese workers; nor had any previous visual images of somber individuals been as precise and haunting as that of the central character leading the group.

Compared to work he had created just a few months earlier (such as *Shoot Those Calling for Resistance*, 1931), *Workers on the Wharf* evidenced an astonishing improvement in Jiang Feng's command of the woodcut medium. With *Workers on the Wharf*, he pioneered the



24 Käthe Kollwitz, *Weavers on the March*, 1897, etching.

representation of large groups in action, a central motif in modern Chinese woodcuts. This print would leave a deep impression on a freshman student at the Hangzhou National Art Academy named Hao Lichun (1912–, later better known as Liqun), who many years later would still recall the shock and revelation of seeing *Workers on the Wharf* for the first time.<sup>35</sup> In the meantime, Kollwitz's impassioned presentation of a mobilized and determined collective would continue to inspire Chinese woodcut artists. Within a year of Jiang Feng's portrayal of the wharf workers, for instance, Zheng Yefu (1909–1973) created his pictorial narrative *Flood*, which includes similar scenes of sullen urban workers on the march (fig. 25).

*Workers on the Wharf* was, in all likelihood, displayed in the Spring Field Painting Society exhibition held at the YMCA in central Shanghai a few weeks after the show of German graphic art, although no catalogue survives from the group's only public exhibition. Besides woodblock prints, the show included oils, ink-and-brush paintings, and charcoal drawing exercises. Organizers also put on view the several dozen German prints that Lu Xun had just exhibited publicly. On opening day, Lu Xun arrived with Xu Guangping, viewed the exhibition, and ordered more than ten woodblock prints for his own collection. Before leaving, he congratulated those present on a breakthrough exhibition.<sup>36</sup>

Soon after, in mid-July 1932, police of the French Concession stormed the building that



25 Zheng Yefu, from *Flood*, 1933, woodcut.

housed the Spring Field Painting Society and arrested members gathered there for an Esperanto class. Most of those arrested were later charged with “endangering the Republic” and sentenced to varying lengths of imprisonment (fig. 26).<sup>37</sup> Thus, the Spring Field Painting Society came to an abrupt end. The incident also marked one of the first cases in which an art group was disbanded for its political orientation by the Settlement police in cooperation with the Chinese authorities.

Almost immediately after the police raid, the remaining members of the Spring Field Painting Society formed the Wild Wind Painting Society. Chen Zhuokun and Zheng Yefu, having joined the new society, would soon enter the most productive period of their respective careers as woodcut artists. One major achievement of the Wild Wind Painting Society—which, like the Spring Field group, would prove to be short-lived—was a joint exhibition that it helped organize at the Shanghai New World amusement park in November 1932. The event aimed to raise funds for the movement against Japanese aggression in Manchuria and drew on submissions from art schools in Shanghai, Beiping, Suzhou, and Hangzhou.

During the same period, at least two other groups with an express interest in the woodcut came into being among students in two prominent art schools in Shanghai. The first



26 Huang Shanding, *Self-Portrait*, 1934, woodcut.

was the M. K. Woodcut Research Society, formed in early fall 1932 at the Shanghai Meizhuan (the “M. K.” standing for *muke*, the romanization of the Chinese term for “woodcut”). Among its initiators were Zhang Wang (1916–1992) and Huang Xinbo (1916–1980). The society quickly attracted more than fifty members and held four exhibitions on the Meizhuan campus during its existence. These exhibitions would include some of the more sophisticated and innovative woodblock prints of the period, partly because the exhibition was not limited to members of the society. A print titled *To the Front* by Hu Yichuan, for instance, was exhibited in one of the society’s shows.<sup>38</sup>

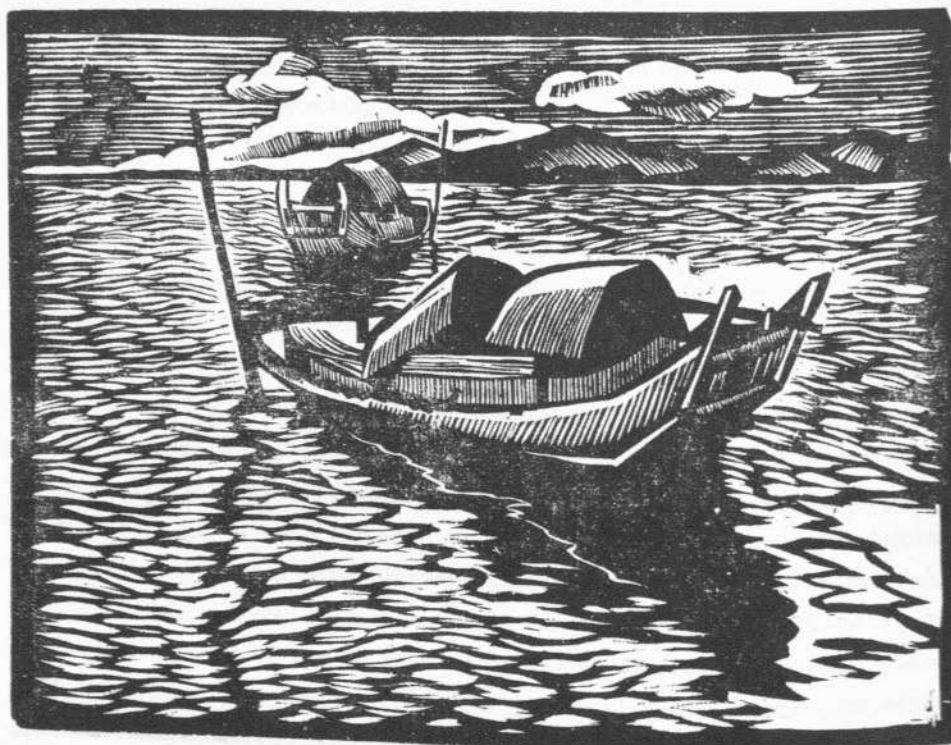
Another woodcut group was based in the neighboring New China Yizhuan and drew on some of the same artists. A smaller organization than the M. K. Woodcut Research Society, the Wild Spike Society became active in the winter of 1932, its core members being Chen Yanqiao (1911–1970), Chen Tiegeng, Zheng Yefu, and He Baitao (1913–1939), most of whom had been involved in one of the earlier Eighteen Art Societies (figs. 27 and 28). There was extended cooperation between the group at the Shanghai Meizhuan and the newer group at the Yizhuan. As a result, the Wild Spike Society did not organize any exhibitions of its own, but instead put together a small volume called *Woodblock Prints* in May 1933. The ten images included in the handmade volume, optimistically numbered the first issue of volume





27 Zheng Yefu, *Prisoner*, ca. 1934, woodcut.

28 He Baitao, *Small Boat*, 1932, woodcut.



one, were all by the four core members of the society. They represented a variety of styles and subject matter, including Chen Yanqiao's depiction of the recent Shanghai war. In October, the last M. K. Woodcut Research Society exhibition included a print by Zheng Yefu in which the artist focused on a solitary night-soil collector before daybreak. Lu Xun visited the exhibition with Uchiyama Kanzō and appreciated the conception of Zheng Yefu's work.<sup>39</sup> The Wild Spike Society was disappointed in the negligible sales of its first volume of woodblock prints, however, and thereafter disbanded.<sup>40</sup>

The pictorial supplement "Selections from Modern Chinese Woodcuts" in the May 1933 issue of *Modern Age* provided a boost to the woodcut movement in Shanghai, effectively announcing the modern Chinese woodcut as a legitimate artistic medium. In his introductory remarks, Ye Lingfeng graciously acknowledged Lu Xun's pivotal role in promoting the woodcut as an independent art form in contemporary China. He specifically mentioned the "exquisite woodcut selections" that Lu Xun had published and the exhibitions that he had supported. Ye also commented on the recent revival of the woodcut in Europe, attributing it to "the expressiveness of infinite variations created by the unique and simple contrast of black and white." Such expressive capacity, according to Ye, had proved to be irreplaceable by modern printing or photography. Noting that contemporary artists in Germany and England had been attracted to the medium for its expressive potential, Ye claimed that the most impressive achievement in the modern European woodcut movement were the more than 660 illustrations made by Frans Masereel for Romain Rolland's novel *Jean Christophe*.

Ye Lingfeng confirmed in his introduction that the decision to feature eight contemporary Chinese woodblock prints in a supplement had been prompted by the large number of submissions *Modern Age* had received following its publication of Hu Yichuan's *A Scene in Zhabei*. In examining the submissions, however, Ye had felt that the range of subject matter was narrow and the number of contributors limited; he had thought about contacting the several existing woodcut societies for a broader collection, but had abandoned this idea due to the journal's pressing production cycle.<sup>41</sup> In describing the range of subject matter as "narrow," Ye Lingfeng probably meant that there was a preoccupation among the woodcut artists with the daily life of the common people. Five of the eight published woodcuts were sympathetic studies of various mundane activities, such as reading a newspaper, selling fruit at the market, or taking a break by the roadside. Three of these were by Xia Peng, formerly a student of the Hangzhou National Art Academy and the only known woman artist interested in woodcuts during this period. Her *Fourth-Class Car*, as her then-lover Hu Yichuan would remark many years later, is reminiscent of the painting *Third-Class Car* by Honoré Daumier (1808–1879) and bespeaks an ethnographic effort to portray an elderly peasant woman of southeastern China (fig. 29).<sup>42</sup> Four of the remaining five prints in the supplement were made by Chen Yanqiao, Chen Tiegeng, Hu Yichuan, and He Baitao—active members of the woodcut community in Shanghai. The print by Chen Yanqiao, titled *At Rest*, showed stylistic influences from Frans Masereel. While Chen Tiegeng struggled to create a dynamic land-

scape in his *Riverside*, Hu Yichuan demonstrated a far more confident mastery of the woodblock as a versatile medium in his *To the Front* (fig. 30). The forward-leaning, diagonally positioned central character is charged with motion and passion, and his outstretched hand visually extends his impassioned call to both the people behind him and the viewer in front of him. This print had been exhibited at an event organized by the M. K. Woodcut Research Society, but its appearance in *Modern Age* brought it greater recognition. As we will see, the concept and visual dynamics of *To the Front* would be echoed in works by many future woodcut artists.

The disbanding of the M. K. Woodcut Research Society by the Settlement police in May 1934 marked the end of the first phase of the woodcut movement in Shanghai, even though the group had been largely inactive since its October 1933 show. This initial phase, beginning with the Eighteen Art Society exhibition in June 1931, had witnessed the growing attraction to the new medium by a group of art students—young, almost exclusively male, and usually trained in Western painting. Their experience of attending various modern-style art schools in the city and nearby Hangzhou prepared them for forming societies, mounting exhibitions, and publishing their works. Their exposure to contemporary art theories and debates, however, made them regard with deep suspicion the institutional implications of an art school. For this group of art students, the woodcut became an anti-institutional medium because it was not part of the established curriculum; it also signified a progressive art form because of its prominence in the revival of printmaking in modern Europe in general and in the expressionist movement in particular. Moreover, the close relationship between this high-contrast graphic art and the left-wing cultural movement endowed the woodcut with an explicitly political bent not associated with other mediums. The young woodcut artists' predilection for social ethnography on the one hand and contemporary events on the other complemented their search for a new visual language and order of representation. The continual political suppression they met with during this period only further convinced them of the explosiveness of their art. Nonetheless, during this early stage the woodcut movement did not yet fully define itself as an artistic avant-garde, and no systematic theoretical discourse was developed. Neither the M. K. Woodcut Research Society nor the Wild Spike Society, as far as we know, issued a manifesto.

As the woodcut movement gained impetus and recognition in the months following the first Shanghai war, two prominent art exhibitions in October 1932 revealed other priorities among various art circles. Dissimilar in scale and status, these two shows nonetheless operated within the same field of modern art that had asserted its legitimacy through a liberal-humanist evocation of art and which now functioned as a crucial cultural and educational institution in Republican China. On the surface, the contrast between the two events may be characterized as that between an accomplished, officially endorsed artist and an insurgent group of modernists who detested mainstream tastes and conceptions. Yet when viewed next to the aspirations of the young woodcut artists, both the established and the innovative



29 Xia Peng, *Fourth-Class Car*, 1932, woodcut.



30 Hu Yichuan, *To the Front*, 1932, woodcut.



artists appeared more concerned with art as formal ingenuity and institutionalized practices than anything else. In the case of the avowed modernists, their obsession with a new way of seeing often forestalled any serious reflections on the object and the larger ramifications of seeing.

One of the exhibitions, sponsored by the municipal government of Shanghai, was a retrospective of the work of Liu Haisu. Of the more than two hundred items on display, the main attraction was the collection of oil paintings Liu had created during his extended government-funded tour of Europe from 1929 through September 1931. The well-publicized event far exceeded in scale anything that had been accorded to either Lin Fengmian or Xu Beihong and brought Liu Haisu plenty of official accolades. A special issue of *Shanghai Pictorial* that came out immediately after the opening reproduced congratulatory calligraphy from Chiang Kai-shek, Chen Shuren, and other luminaries. Five glowing reviews followed, in which Liu Haisu was variously hailed as "the forerunner of the revolution in art," "leader of the new art in the nation," and "Maître de la Renaissance chinoise." The massive campaign to crown Liu as de facto artist laureate of the state, however, was marred by a bitter squabble that soon erupted between Liu and Xu Beihong.

It was no secret that the French-trained Xu Beihong had little regard for the self-taught Liu Haisu. No sooner had the Liu Haisu retrospective closed than Xu published an intemperate notice in *Shun Pao* to clarify that he had never been Liu's student. He belittled the Shanghai Meizhuan as an illegitimate, profiteering venture and Liu himself as no less than a boastful rogue.<sup>43</sup> Liu Haisu promptly retaliated in kind, attributing Xu's slander to malicious jealousy. Liu also expressed astonishment at the rudeness of a self-anointed "gentleman in art" and went on to deplore Xu's inability to grow out of a stale academic style.<sup>44</sup> This spiraling exercise in ignobility was met with strong distaste by one newspaper editor, who publicly censured Xu for resorting to mean-spirited language and regretted that Liu hardly lived up to the title of a grand master.<sup>45</sup>

Effusive orchestrated celebrations notwithstanding, the exhibition drew biting criticism for its blatant commercialism. One contemporary viewer calculated that the total price tag for all the works on display was more than 42,000 Chinese yuan. (The average price for a painting from Liu's European tour was 217 yuan and, as was customary, ink-and-brush paintings cost much less than oils.) Pointing out that his post-tour paintings cost more than his earlier work, the sarcastic reviewer concluded that it must mean that Liu's art had improved.<sup>46</sup> Another irreverent reviewer, Kaifan, who in 1929 had written a less-than-respectful review of the first *National Fine Arts Exhibition*, gave a tongue-in-cheek account of his visit to the much-touted retrospective inside the cavernous exhibition hall. He commented on the odd location, poor lighting, and inexplicable presence of fabric vendors but had nothing to say about the "noble" paintings themselves.<sup>47</sup>

The other art show that opened in October 1932 was organized by the Storm Society, a group established in September 1931 by five artists trained in Western painting and committed to a modernist aesthetic. The group's two key figures were Pang Xunqin (1906–1985)

and Ni Yide. Pang had returned to China in early 1930 after almost five years in Paris as a student of oil painting and modernist art at the Académie Julien; Ni Yide, once a member of the Creation Society, had traveled briefly to Japan in 1927 to study oil painting and art history and had recently arrived in Shanghai from the inland city of Wuchang. Their coming together, observes Ralph Croizier, was "a fortunate meeting for modernism in China, bringing together foreign experience and local connections."<sup>48</sup> While Pang would enjoy greater recognition due to his distinct style and European credentials, the spokesperson of the new group was Ni Yide, a richly talented writer, artist, and art critic.

The group initially planned to open its first exhibition on New Year's Day of 1932. By April of that year, with its exhibition delayed yet again by the ongoing Shanghai war, the Storm Society nonetheless had attracted over a dozen like-minded artists, mostly from the outlawed Deux Mondes Society (with which Pang Xunqin had been involved in late 1930) and the Muse Society (recently formed at the Shanghai Meizhuan by Ni Yide and others). In September, the trimonthly publication *Art*, edited by Ni Yide on behalf of the Muse Society, announced the creation of the Storm Society and its upcoming exhibition. It also listed seven members, among them Wang Jiyuan, Yang Taiyang (1909–), and Zhou Duo. Ten days later, the fourth issue of *Art* advertised the new Storm Society as a collective of "radical young artists" with a sharp, modern sensibility, in pursuit of a new and unique art. "Dissatisfied with the banality, decay, and impotence of the art field in the nation, they have decided to come together for a new start and hope to create a new era in art." The editorial also compared the Storm Society's goal to that of the fauvist group in France around 1905, in that both sought to break with tradition and challenge the dominant style.<sup>49</sup> On October 9, 1932, the first Storm Society exhibition finally took place, at the China Knowledge and Science Society in the French Concession. (About three weeks earlier, Pang Xunqin had held his first solo show at the same facility, and several of his paintings would subsequently be reproduced in the widely popular pictorial *Young Companion*.<sup>50</sup>) At the same time, the Storm Society manifesto appeared in the fifth issue of *Art*, along with a spate of supporting articles.

The Storm Society manifesto, drafted by Ni Yide, proposed a radical conception of painting as the continual innovation of form. It was probably the most aggressive and self-consciously avant-garde statement on art to be made during this period. Up until then, no other art group or school had made such direct evocations of fauvism, cubism, Dadaism, or surrealism in its public statements; nor had any other manifesto so bluntly called for twentieth-century Chinese art to emulate those European precedents. In both style and substance, the Storm Society manifesto cried out to be read as belonging to a modern international genre of bestirring pronouncements; its central ethos, as Wang Jiyuan noted in an accompanying article, was commitment by the "soldiers of a revolution in art" to a forever-forward movement.<sup>51</sup>

The antidote that the Storm Society prescribed to a lifeless "environment of compromise" was for artists to "commit ourselves to giving an uninhibited expression to our vigorous spirit" and to liberate painting from both imitating nature and stale representationalism. "Let us

rise! With our hurricane of passion and ironlike reason, let us create our own world crisscrossed with color, line, and shape!" What this passionate discourse on "the mandate of a new art" (Wang Jiyuan's phrase) did not address, however, was the connection or difference between the "vigorous spirit" of the storming artists and the "spirit of the new age," which their new techniques were supposed to express.<sup>52</sup>

There was a deep resonance with the expressionist rhetoric of the Creation Society, not only in the manifesto but also in the accompanying texts. Even the image of a cleansing flood unleashed by the "giants of the Storm Society," the central theme of an article by the art critic Li Baoquan,<sup>53</sup> was distinctly reminiscent of the enterprise that the Creation Society had undertaken in the early 1920s. By the early 1930s, however, heroic statements about artists as creative geniuses no longer had the same appeal to young art students. Competing theories of art had introduced different sets of issues and concepts that made such an insistence on formal innovation appear rather single-minded, if not altogether self-indulgent.

A testament to the divergent discourses on art that existed in China at the time can be found in the January 1933 issue of *Art* (by this time published as a monthly). In a forum called "The Future of Art in China," which had been put together, according to Ni Yide, specifically in response to a general confusion and lack of consensus in the field of art, a number of noted artists and critics offered their opinions. All eight contributors voiced discontent with the current state of affairs, but the solutions they each prescribed differed significantly. The bright path that Wang Jiyuan outlined for a creative and independent art of all humanity, for instance, remained as abstract and truistic as the immersion in an experiential depth and "passion humaine" that the French-educated art critic Fu Lei (1908–1966) urged contemporary artists to practice. (In the fall of 1931, after three years of studying art history and theory in Paris, Fu Lei had sailed back to Shanghai with Liu Haisu. During Liu's two-year sojourn in Europe, Fu Lei had been his knowledgeable guide and admirer. In an essay published in the French journal *L'art vivant*, "The Crisis in Modern Chinese Art," Fu Lei celebrated Liu Haisu, the "rebellious artist," for winning the "terrible battle" over the use of nude models. He criticized "ultra-moderns" for their blind imitation of futurism and cubism, and reprimanded those "humanists" who claimed to represent the proletariat but showed "neither solid execution nor true emotion." In a footnote, he characterized Lin Fengmian as a "modernist on the left" and Xu Beihong as the "chief of the academic school," respectively.<sup>54</sup> Fu Lei's assessment of contemporary Chinese art clearly reflected Liu Haisu's view at the time.<sup>55</sup>)

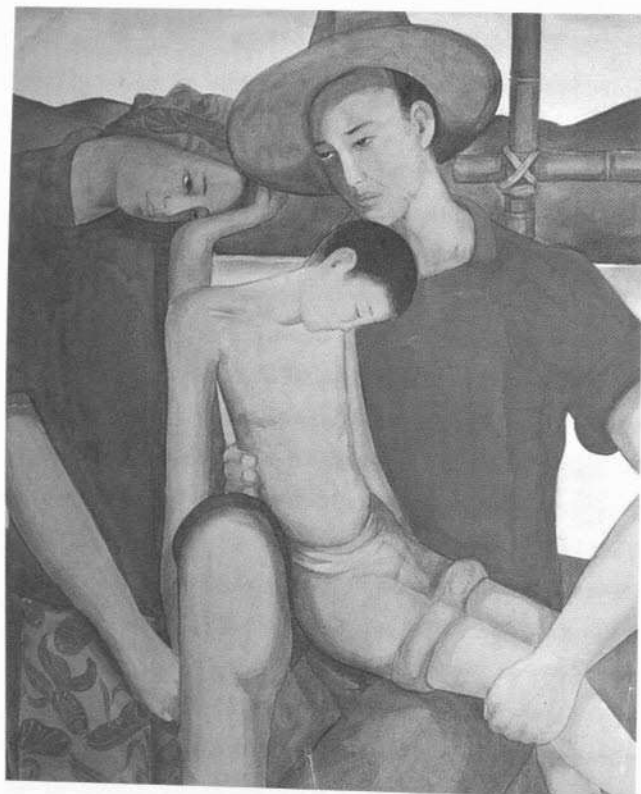
Next to Fu Lei's questioning of the premises of a proletarian art, Zheng Boqi predicted that the most promising art of the future would be that of the laboring masses. Both critics rejected the camera's mechanical image, but while Fu Lei idolized art wrought by sensitive artistic souls, Zheng called for a realist art based on a collective engagement with history—an art for and by a working class conscious of its role as a political vanguard. This obviously differed from the "public art" that journalist and educator Xu Zexiang deemed imperative in an age of social instability and national crisis. Xu's rousing plea for a unified artistic effort to reach and mobilize the public was echoed by two other contributors, who made a simi-

lar charge that contemporary art had mistakenly shielded itself from a crisis-laden China. (Significantly, both the maverick poet Zeng Jinke [1901–1971] and the aspiring writer Tang Zengyang singled out as a commendable exception Wang Jiyuan's July 1932 exhibition of work depicting the recent Shanghai war.)

Against such forceful demands for a socially responsive art, the critic Li Baoquan, who was closely associated with the Storm Society, offered a new apology for the doctrine of "art for art's sake." In an age when technologies of mass communication and reproduction had rendered superfluous the artist's erstwhile task to inform and advocate, Li argued, art for art would mean a serious dedication to the creation of poetic, beautiful, and hermeneutically layered objects of art. Finally, in an effort to sort out the tension between Chinese and Western painting, between traditional and modern styles, Ni Yide proposed the fundamental criterion to be content: the key question to be asked was whether the essence of contemporary China was captured. All foreign elements, he argued, should therefore be absorbed for the creation of a distinctly Chinese art. "But what techniques to employ? Which subject matter to choose? And what, after all, is the essence that ought to be represented as that of contemporary China?" These, Ni Yide conceded in the end, were challenging questions with no simple answers.<sup>56</sup>

This theoretical reflection did not seem to concern the Storm Society as a whole, which devoted remarkable energy to instituting an annual exhibition in the next few years but would see its impact quickly dwindle. Far fewer visitors showed up at the second exhibition, in the fall of 1933, after which Wang Jiyuan withdrew from the society. (The 1933 exhibition awarded a prize to the oil painter and Meizhuan graduate Qiu Di [1906–1958]. Her prize-winning entry caused a controversy because the potted plant in her decorative still life appeared to have red leaves and green flowers.) Pang Xunqin would later recall that the painting of his to draw the most attention during this period was *Son of the Earth*, which he displayed at the society's third exhibition in 1934 (fig. 31). Yet the attention given to Pang's symbolist rendition of peasants suffering from a devastating drought exceeded his anticipation in an alarming way: despite viewers' appreciation, the highly stylized painting, "a surprisingly Western-looking modern Pietà complete with a cross in the background,"<sup>57</sup> was suspected of antigovernment sentiments and was therefore banned from appearing in newspapers or journals. A death threat to the artist soon followed, and Pang had to flee to the International Settlement with the help of Fu Lei, a friend from his days in Paris.<sup>58</sup> This was, after all, a time when the White Terror engineered by the Nanjing government had blacklisted writers such as Lu Xun and Mao Dun and had made Ding Ling disappear; a time that witnessed the infamous assassination, in June 1933, of Yang Xingfo (1893–1933), secretary general of the China League for Civil Rights, an organization that in May had just presented a formal letter to the German consulate in Shanghai to protest a "fearful Terror against the German working class and progressive thinkers";<sup>59</sup> a time when an anti-Communist vigilante group would methodically smash an allegedly left-leaning film studio as well as the retail store of the popular Liangyou Press.





31 Pang Xunqin, *Son of the Earth*, 1934, watercolor study.

### 1933: HANGZHOU AND BEIPING

Among the many contemporary developments that the Storm Society scornfully brushed aside was the Art Movement Society headed by Lin Fengmian. Four years after its formation in the summer of 1928, the Art Movement Society, based at the Hangzhou National Art Academy, had lost much of its momentum, even though its fourth and final exhibition, held in Shanghai in March 1934, still drew considerable crowds.<sup>60</sup> There were important parallels between these two art societies—their core members were similarly versed in modern European, often specifically French, art, and their ideas for waging an art movement were largely identical: forming a group, putting out a manifesto or publication, and organizing regular exhibitions. The disregard the Storm Society had for its predecessor, therefore, reflected the structural tension between a fledgling art group and a more established and resource-rich institution. This tension was ineluctably compounded by diverging artistic styles, competitive academic pedigrees, and strong personalities.<sup>61</sup>

While willful forgetting may have been necessary for an assertion of originality, the Storm Society's avowed embrace of modernism kept the group from recognizing the implications of the emerging woodcut movement. A fundamentally different expectation of art separated the Storm Society from participants in the woodcut movement, although the difference be-

tween them, as we will see, could hardly be reduced to a matter of creative "expression" versus lifeless "representation."

From 1933 to 1935, as the impact of the Storm Society steadily diminished, the woodcut movement spread from Shanghai to other cities. The growing appeal of woodblock prints as a public art form was fueled by significant developments in both theory and practice. Young artists turning to the woodcut put forth new statements on art and its necessity; they also consciously explored and experimented with new ways of making and displaying art. In the end, the woodcut movement would challenge established conventions of art in far more radical ways than ever envisioned by previous art movements, including the eloquently iconoclastic Storm Society.

In February 1933, a woodcut study group was formed at the Hangzhou National Art Academy. To the student members of the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society (a name that expressed their confidence in making a dull bell yield a resonating sound), hardly any difference existed between the formalist claims of the Storm Society and the curriculum at the National Art Academy, both of which leaned toward modernist art. Partly in revolt against the academic atmosphere and partly stimulated by writings on new realism and an anti-establishment proletarian art, the artists of the new group, led by Liqun, Cao Bai (1914–?), Ye Luo (1912–1985), and Xu Tiankai (1912–?), had decided to take up black-and-white woodblock prints. The first thing to do was rather mundane: ordering usable chisels from a local blacksmith. Liqun would later fondly recall that when they applied the new instruments to blocks of wood, the challenge and pleasure of making an incision and removing a wood chip felt as exhilarating as the experience of plowing a field must have felt to a farmer.<sup>62</sup> Within two months, members of the society had produced more than sixty prints, and on April 1 they held their first exhibition in a classroom, the first ever modern woodcut exhibition in the Hangzhou area.

To their first show, the students also brought 120 copies of a volume of fourteen selected images, which they had hand-printed and assembled the night before. At the price of fourteen coppers per copy, *Wooden Bell Woodcut Exhibition* was sold out within hours, although the group did keep one copy and would later present it to Lu Xun. It also carried a brief statement on the significance of the woodblock print:

A woodcut is the most economical and the most convenient art form, with broad accessibility. In Germany, serial woodblock prints are as popular as the pictorial narratives available at market bookstalls are here, such as *Seven Swordsmen* and *Thirteen Knight-Errants* or *Investiture of Gods*. They are enjoyed by common people of the lower social strata. These prints have nothing in common with an oil painting that is to be exclusively possessed by a member of the upper class.<sup>63</sup>

The statement underscored two distinct characteristics of the woodblock print, claiming that it was both a democratic and a public form of art. In succinct terms, the statement cast the difference between the reproducible, affordable woodblock print and the expensive oil

painting as primarily signifying separate social and economic strata. Acknowledging the nature of the woodblock print as an object that could be bought and owned, the statement questioned how a nonpossessive relationship to this object could be developed in the pursuit of a truly public and socially engaged art. By suggesting that the defining feature of public art lay in its direct and intimate, even tactile, participation in social life, the statement implicitly proposed a new way of displaying and disseminating art that would distinguish the woodblock print from the fetishistic oil painting.<sup>64</sup>

The reasons cited by the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society for the woodcut's appeal had broad resonance. In 1932, for instance, when the accomplished British wood-engraver Clare Leighton (1901–1989) wrote to explain the “enormous rush of wood-engravings produced nowadays,” she began with the economic conditions and demands that came with the expanded “modern public.” “It is interesting to note that while the disappearance of a leisured upper class in Russia has all but killed the demand for studio paintings, the growth of a vast new public of readers has brought an immense stimulus to wood-engraving.” Leighton also took note of the wide use of wood engravings as book illustrations and interior decorations. However, for the creative artist, “fatigued with the photographic representation of life in the more conventional etching, we call for greater subjectiveness,” and the woodblock proved to be an effective and versatile means of self-expression.<sup>65</sup>

The first woodblock print in the exhibition's commemorative volume partly indicates the source of the ideas expressed in the preface. It is an unusually fine portrait of Anatoly Lunacharsky, whose essays on Marxist art theory, made available by Lu Xun and others, were on the reading list of the Wooden Bell collective.<sup>66</sup> The print, clearly modeled after a Soviet original, was made by Cao Bai. Another print from the collection, presented as an exercise, was a reverse copy of Benvenuto Disertori's *La Musa del Loreto*, which was reproduced in the first volume of *Selections of Modern Woodcuts*, put out by Lu Xun in January 1929. The rest of the volume reflects a considerable range of styles and varying degrees of technical competence, although it is clear that the students' central concern was the common people: industrial workers, downcast peasants, soldiers in combat, and street children. The prints by Liqun and Xu Tiankai dealt with resistance against Japanese aggression in Shanghai and Manchuria, respectively. A print titled *Negotiation* by sculpture student Xiao Chuanjiu (1914–1968) was arguably the most sophisticated work of the group (fig. 32). It depicts a tense situation, with three workers confronting an arrogant, cigar-smoking, cane-wielding capitalist. Firm white lines and the sharp angles of industrial objects, all set against an oppressive dark background, indicate a careful study of theatrical effect and composition.

Encouraged by the success of its first show, the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society mounted a much larger exhibition in Hangzhou, opening on June 15, 1933. In an effort to put into practice its belief in the public nature of woodblock prints, it held the three-day event in the local Hall of Popular Education, a cultural institution that had been created at various levels of government in the Republic. On display were some sixty woodblock prints by Wooden Bell members, as well as more than a hundred works in oil, charcoal, and



32 Xiao Chuanjiu, *Negotiation*, 1933, woodcut.

watercolor submitted by another student group. Instead of a handmade commemorative volume, the society published a machine-printed collection titled *Wooden Bell Woodcuts*, in which thirty prints from the exhibition were reproduced.

Judging by the content of *Wooden Bell Woodcuts*, the central concern of the woodcut group continued to be human figures in social contexts, even when the visual idiom of German expressionism was employed. Except for one image of natural scenery, the prints focus on an array of victims—of fatigue, hunger, and sickness; of unemployment, torture, and war; and also of a more abstract terror and wordless agony. A print titled *Wound* by Baixin, for instance, compresses into the frame the faces of four coarsely outlined but obviously distraught individuals, the intensity of whose anguish is indicated by the exploding flamelike dots that highlight the central figure in relief (fig. 33). In contrast to the intensity of this psychological study, Xu Tiankai's *Scene from the Baoshi Hill* is more figural and suggests a narrative. A dazed laborer, taking a much-needed break, sits in the shaded foreground, staring blankly at a cart loaded with coal in front of him. In the distance stands a cluster of industrial buildings, while a disquieting scene of abuse is sketched in the intermediate open space. The resting worker seems to seek shelter from the surrounding landscape, and the viewer's sympathy is explicitly aligned with him.

In addition to works that depict victims of natural disasters or social injustice, the collection also includes several prints that present human agents in action. The two prints by Ye Luo, titled *Urban Warfare* and *Confrontation*, present an intriguing study of perspectives

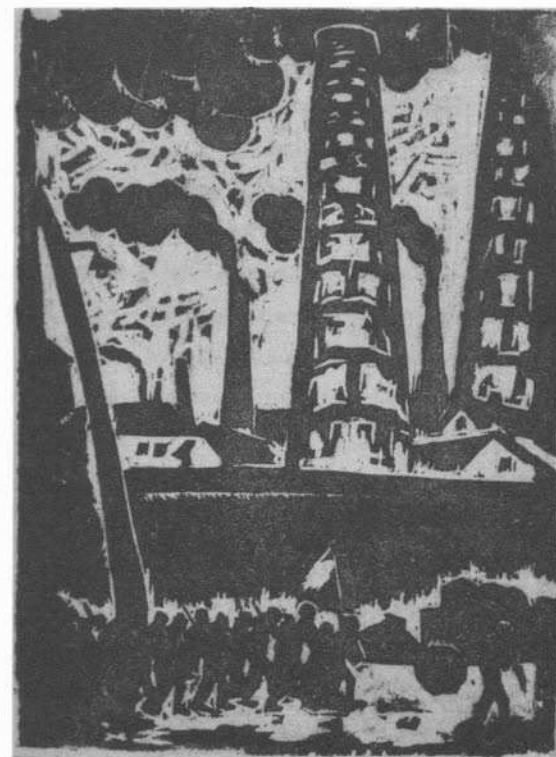


33 Baixin, *Wound*, 1933, woodcut.

and composition. A contemporary viewer would see in the first print a snapshot of the recent Shanghai war: placed in the middle of a gun battle, the viewer gains a frontal view of a soldier returning enemy fire. By contrast, the second print, intended to express solidarity for marching workers, creates such a towering industrial landscape that the human subjects can hardly emerge from underneath the oppressive environment, let alone undermine it (fig. 34). If the close-up of urban warfare directs our view to the lionized individual, the distancing long shot of a tense scene of confrontation reveals little of the impact of human action.

In *Remembrance of May* by Chen Guang (1907–?), a column of protesting workers on International Workers' Day receives a different treatment: instead of being viewed from the side and at a distance, the marchers form a surging collective that exceeds the frame and steadily presses ahead toward the viewer. From a tilted angle above the marchers, the viewer can appreciate individual members of the group and at the same time imagine its vast extension. This eyewitness point of view gives way to a highly conceptual image in *To the Front* by Zhong Kaizhi. Though less sophisticated, Zhong Kaizhi's woodcut has a similar composition and an identical title to those of a print made by Hu Yichuan in 1932, published in the May 1933 issue of *Modern Age*.

The Wooden Bell group added to its earlier statement about the nature of the woodcut as an artistic medium with a new preface in *Wooden Bell Woodcuts* that further rejected formalist claims and endorsed an explicitly social function for art. The task of the artist, the preface announced, was not to produce abstract colors and shapes, but rather to "bring the

34 Ye Luo, *Confrontation*, 1933, woodcut.

content of art closer to the public, which alone will bring to life art itself." This indispensable public was then specified as the "laboring and suffering masses" who had been alienated from art and denied its enjoyment and benefits. In the new age that was dawning, artists as members of the intellectual class could no longer turn away from the deprived masses, but should offer them guidance and encourage them to strive for a new existence. Seeing this as their historical mandate, the preface's authors acknowledged that they were far from being happy with their efforts and implored sympathetic criticism.<sup>67</sup>

One shortcoming they identified in their current work was that they were not able to "express fully" what they wished to express. Their theoretical awareness of the need to bring art to the masses had translated into an effort to represent the masses in their art. Their goal, the authors explained, was to create more credible and more graphic representations of everyday life, by means of which they could better set forth their artistic as well as their social vision. Through its practice and writings, the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society began to articulate two salient features of the woodcut movement at this stage: a commitment to represent the underrepresented, and a conviction in the exhortative power of a distinctly democratic artistic medium.

Soon after the Wooden Bell group mounted the first-ever public exhibition of creative woodcuts in the Hangzhou area in early April 1933, another group held a woodcut exhibition in Beiping to the north. (The old capital, Beijing, had been renamed Beiping in 1928 by the Nanjing government.) Held in a classroom at the Yiwen Middle School, the exhibition

similarly introduced woodcuts as an avant-garde artistic medium. The show's organizers had a connection to the Hangzhou National Art Academy: after the Eighteen Art Society was dissolved by the school's administration, members of the society were either expelled or advised to transfer, and at least four of them, including Wang Zhanfei and Wang Zhaoming (1908–2003), were offered a certificate and told to enroll in the Fine Arts College of Peking University.<sup>68</sup>

Ever since the massive exodus of the cultural establishment in 1927, when the Nationalist government settled in the Yangtze delta, the ancient city that had nurtured and witnessed the May Fourth Movement had seen its political and intellectual relevance rapidly diminish, even though it remained a regional center of higher education. In November 1932, when he returned to the city for a family visit, Lu Xun found that except for empty shops and general disrepair, not much had changed since his departure in 1926. In letters to Xu Guangping and friends, Lu Xun noted that he was struck by the city's pervasive stillness, which stood in sharp contrast to the sound and fury of urban life in Shanghai. He also reported that he was delighted to see some of his old friends, whose hospitality led him to sigh over the exploitative nature of personal relationships in Shanghai. In addition, Lu Xun commented that political repression in the hibernating city felt less suffocating than it did in Shanghai, even though the Japanese military was a much more direct threat.<sup>69</sup> During his brief trip, he gave lectures at various universities and met representatives from left-wing literary societies.<sup>70</sup>

A barren landscape made bearable by a somewhat relaxed political atmosphere—this was Lu Xun's impression of Beiping in the winter of 1932, the period when the four transfer students from the Hangzhou National Art Academy arrived one after another. Upon arriving in Beiping, Wang Zhanfei and his friends settled in with the help of Wang Jingfang (1900–1956), a student at the Beijing Fine Arts College from 1924 to 1925 and now an art teacher at the Yiwen Middle School. Also through Wang Jingfang, the new arrivals got in contact with the local art community, finding a group called the World Art Research Society, which remained passionately dedicated to some of the radical ideas about art expressed during the 1927 Art Convention organized by Lin Fengmian. They might also have felt, as Lu Xun suggested was the case, that artists on the left seemed to enjoy a less repressive environment than did their comrades in Shanghai or Hangzhou.

Organized by the artist and would-be art historian Wang Junchu (later known as Hu Man, 1904–1986) in August 1931, the World Art Research Society gathered adventurous young artists, among them Li Kuchan (1899–1983) and Wang Daizhi, and regarded itself as an extension and ally of the Northern League of Left-Wing Writers (the Northern Zuolian), which had come into being in October 1930.<sup>71</sup> At its formation, the society created a one-page publication, *Art Weekly*, to put forth pertinent news as well as theoretical writings by members. In the following months, the weekly turned into a forum for activist views on art and society. In August 1932, for instance, it featured an article titled “Revolution in National Painting” that commended Wang Jingfang for embodying the ideal of a modern, democratic artist. The article called for a revolution to challenge the social status and circulation system that

traditional Chinese painting had come to enjoy, and cheered Wang Jingfang, who pointedly repudiated the role of a traditional painter as well as the rarified status of art by befriending common people and making them art for free.<sup>72</sup> Next to the call for an overhaul of Chinese painting as a parasitic social practice was an article titled “The Current Tasks of Art,” which argued that the task of the artist in the age of war and revolution was “to analyze the modern condition” and “to participate in and represent revolution.” The new art must express the collective consciousness of the working class, it continued, and utilize lucid and lively forms; if it failed to do so, art would remain “a mere commodity, a product of the market, and the artist would be no more than an employee of the bourgeoisie.”<sup>73</sup> By May 1933, the weekly would initiate a discussion of the content and form of realist art.

In the meantime, *Art Weekly* also maintained a keen interest in world art. A summary introduction to schools of modern art such as futurism, cubism, expressionism, and Dadaism by the Japanese left-wing playwright, director, and artist Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901–1977), for example, was serialized in January 1933. (Leader of the avant-garde Mavo group in Japan, Murayama was the “self-proclaimed interpreter of European modernism” through the 1920s.<sup>74</sup>) Within two months, Wang Junchu provided a translation of an article by VOKS (Soviet Society for Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries) on the national art museum in Moscow. Following that, the weekly published a translation of a lengthy article by the Mexican artist Diego Rivera (1886–1957) on the revolutionary spirit in modern art.

The woodcut exhibition at the Yiwen Middle School took place from April 16 to 20, 1933, and was promptly reviewed in *Art Weekly*. Prior to its opening, the exhibition was announced in the inaugural issue of *Literature Magazine*, the organ of the Northern Zuolian. The brief notice stated that a “woodcut research society” would be exhibiting works by woodcut artists from Beiping and Shanghai, plus numerous pieces by world-renowned artists.<sup>75</sup> (Given that two copies of the journal reached Lu Xun on April 28, he might have been aware of the event.) The day after the show opened, the *Beiping Morning Post* ran a story to cover “the first ever woodcut exhibition” in Beiping. The report described how the prints were hung on the bare walls of the drab, small building, without any fancy frames. All the images “drew on real social life and facts of war as their material” and “darkly expressed a deep indignation over the state of the nation.”<sup>76</sup> About the same time, both the *Northern Star* in Beiping and the *Yongbao* in Tianjin also published reviews calling attention to the groundbreaking event.<sup>77</sup>

The *Art Weekly* review was by far the most extensive, because it also described the woodcut medium itself. Observing that the contemporary interest in the woodcut owed much to the influence of Western art, the reviewer attributed its growing visibility to the use of woodblock prints as illustrations in new literary magazines and publications, and identified Lu Xun as the most enthusiastic promoter of the new art form. A graphic art that was convenient to produce, exhibit, and distribute, the woodcut was well suited to serve artists with limited resources, the reviewer observed, and the medium's expressiveness was unlimited and liberating. “With this tool [the engraving knife], an artist (in fact, any person) acquires nothing short of the best and the most convenient art to express a living consciousness”—the



woodcut was therefore to be regarded as more than a minor piece next to an oil canvas or large scroll.

Regarding the sixty or so prints included in the exhibition, the review noted that the majority of them were concerned with representing the life of the working class and observed that some of the works displayed sophisticated techniques. Listed as representative works were eighteen prints by thirteen artists, among them Xia Peng, Hu Yichuan, and Xu Tiankai, all from the Hangzhou National Art Academy. Many of the titles of these eighteen prints explicitly named their subjects: coolies, boatmen, street cleaners, coal collectors, road workers, the unemployed, and members of the volunteer army fighting in Manchuria. Even though some of these prints were immature in terms of technique, commented the reviewer, "these revolutionary-spirited works of art by the young are most promising and will definitely succeed." The review ends with a call to artists: "Today, amid petitions for resistance against Japan, what an artist needs to produce most urgently, as long as he is not a philanthropist or humanist, is a committed, anti-imperialist art."<sup>78</sup>

The four students transferred from Hangzhou played a crucial part in making the first woodcut exhibition in Beiping a success (even though a vaguely named "woodcut research society" was given as its main sponsor). These former members of the Eighteen Art Society made it possible for woodcut artists active in Shanghai and Hangzhou to be included in the exhibition and thereby paved the way for an embryonic national network. A second exhibition took place at the beginning of July 1933, again at the Yiwen Middle School, and *Art Weekly* and local newspapers again helped publicize the show. Prints by Jiang Feng, Hu Yichuan, Zheng Yefu, as well as members of the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society were part of the exhibition.<sup>79</sup> On July 6, in its column on art news, *Art Weekly* reported on the more than sixty new woodblock prints on display, describing most of them as "representing current social conditions and the revolutionary sentiment of the masses." The exhibition was jointly organized by two new art groups, the Beiping Woodcut Research Society and the Beiping Painting Research Society. During the exhibition, the former held an open enrollment, drawing a dozen new members, and a gathering of about twenty artists formally announced the society's establishment soon after.<sup>80</sup> The collective contribution of the Beiping Painting Research Society to the exhibition was a gigantic mural called *Today*, over ten meters in width and as high as the ceiling. The *Art Weekly* report lauded the mural for its panoramic representation of the globe and celebrated it as a new "synthetic painting."<sup>81</sup>

Next to this news report, *Art Weekly* published a review of the exhibition, which favorably compared this new iteration with the "extremely impressive" April exhibition, noting the increased number of works and stylistic variations. New styles had allowed some artists to broaden their scope and fully engage current events, the reviewer applauded. Others, however, merely reflected "fragments of reality without indicating a revolutionary consciousness" or presented abstract images more suitable for cartoons; a small number of works even told decadent stories. In comparison, the mural won unreserved praise from the reviewer, who marveled at the rhythmic tension between geometric curves and shapes, the complex spa-

tial relations between figures and scenes, and the brilliant colors and wavy lines, which were said to convey a layered distance and dynamic emotion. Such harmonious achievements in content and form, asserted the reviewer, meant the mural was destined for a magnificent new age and not just the interior of a building.<sup>82</sup> (This engrossing description of *Today*, which was likely the earliest modern Chinese mural collectively created for an exhibition, makes it all the more regrettable that no reproduction of it can be found. In March 1934, as we will see, the mural, renamed *Today's World*, arrived in Paris as the centerpiece of the exhibition *Painters and Printmakers from Revolutionary China* at the Galerie Billiet-Pierre Vorms. It subsequently disappeared altogether, along with the rest of the Paris exhibition, which included fifty-eight woodblock prints.)

The two well-publicized exhibitions in Beiping, along with those mounted by the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society in Hangzhou, significantly extended the reach of the woodcut and generated great publicity for the new medium beyond Shanghai. Together with the collection of contemporary woodcuts published prominently in *Modern Age* in May, these exhibitions made the year 1933 a significant landmark in the history of the emerging woodcut movement. They allowed the young woodcut artists and their supporters better to articulate their artistic vision and beliefs, and they also prepared for further networking and coordination among woodcut groups across the nation. Such theoretical as well as organizational developments interjected a tremendous momentum and quickly propelled the movement onto the national scene. By the middle of 1934, woodcut societies in Beiping and Tianjin were already announcing their decision to organize a joint national exhibition.

## A VISUAL ESPERANTO

By comparison, the woodcut community in Shanghai kept a relatively low profile during this period because of tightening political control and a robust commercial culture. Occasional small-scale exhibitions were held by woodcut groups, and woodblock prints by Chinese artists began to appear intermittently in journals and periodicals; given the circumstances, however, there could hardly be a sustained effort to coordinate a woodcut movement, let alone extend it to the national scene. Nonetheless, Shanghai's energetic publishing industry continued to make modern woodcuts available, especially those by contemporary European printmakers, and Shanghai remained the relay point for spreading the latest developments in international art and art movements to other parts of China. Favored by more and more editors and publishers, the black-and-white woodblock print served as the visual equivalent of a universal Esperanto and helped express a complex cosmopolitan vision of the era. At the same time, the noticeably European accents of the visual language attracted attention, and the question of an effective native form was raised.

Starting in May 1933, when it put out a selection of modern Chinese woodcuts, the journal *Modern Age* would feature a different foreign woodblock print on the covers of six new





35 Edvard Munch, *Smell of Death*,  
1915, woodcut with gouges.

issues as the main visual attraction. Representative works by Robert Gibbings, Clare Leighton, Frans Masereel, and others were presented to the steadily growing readership of the journal. In July, the inaugural issue of *Literature*, a monthly publication launched by former members of the disbanded Literary Research Association, published several of Nikolai Piskarev's distinctive wood-engraving illustrations for the Soviet novel *The Iron Flood*. In the next two issues, *Literature* reprinted woodblock prints by an eclectic group of artists, including Paul Gauguin, Erich Heckel, Edvard Munch, Władysław Skoczylas, André Derain, and A. D. Goncharov. From October 1933 until February 1934, the journal would focus exclusively on German expressionism, introducing four prints every month and thus creating a mini-collection of works by Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Emil Nolde, Franz Marc, Christian Rohlf, Max Pechstein, and many others. Some of these stark images, such as Munch's *Smell of Death* (fig. 35) and Rohlf's *The Prisoner* (fig. 36), would serve as inspiring models for young Chinese woodcut artists, as can be seen in a print by Chen Puzhi (1911–1950) (fig. 37).

An even more significant event was the publication of four Frans Masereel pictorial narratives by the Liangyou Press in September 1933. The event also brought together four prominent individuals, each in his own way a cosmopolitan intellectual of modern China and each of whom endorsed the series by providing an introduction to one of the volumes. The first two of these individuals were Lu Xun and Ye Lingfeng, who only a few years before had harbored a mutual animosity. The other two were Yu Dafu and Zhao Jiabi (1908–1997), the latter being the energetic editor in chief of the Liangyou Press. After coming across a set of Masereel books in a local German bookstore, Zhao had decided to reprint them, a decision



PLATE 1 Gao Qifeng, *Roaring Tiger*, 1916, ink on paper.





PLATE 2 (opposite, top) Liu Haisu, *The Front Gate of Beijing*, 1922, oil on canvas.

PLATE 3 (opposite, below) Xu Beihong, *Tian Heng and His Five Hundred Retainers*, 1928-30, oil on canvas.

PLATE 4 (above) Jiang Feng, *Workers on the Wharf*, 1932, woodcut.



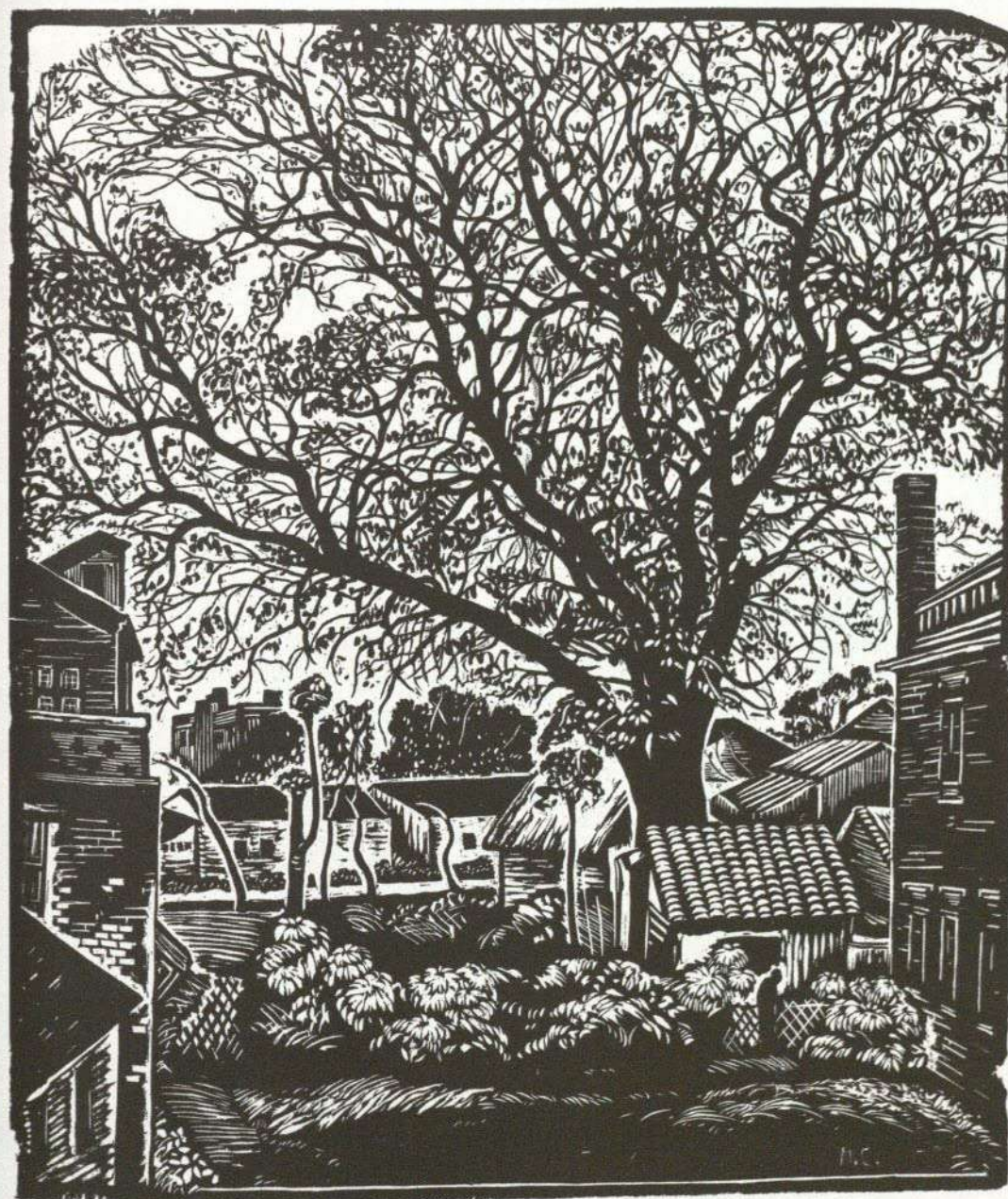


PLATE 5 (opposite) Li Hua, *New Green*,  
1934, woodcut.

PLATE 6 Chen Yanqiao, *Spring Scene*,  
1935, woodcut.



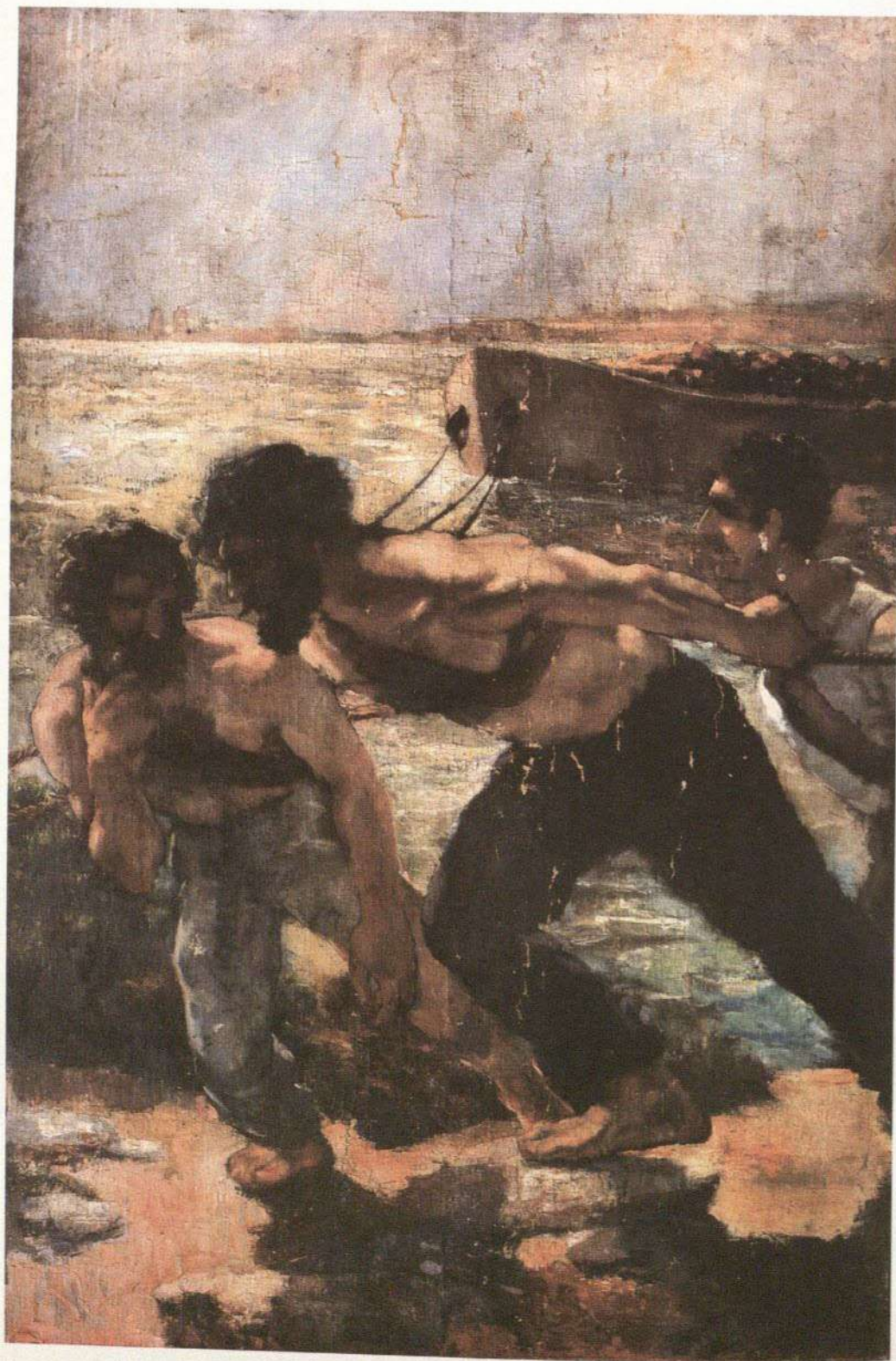


PLATE 7 (opposite) Wu Zuoren, *Boat Trackers*,  
1932, oil on canvas.

PLATE 8 Lai Shaoqi, *Hunger*, 1935, woodcut.



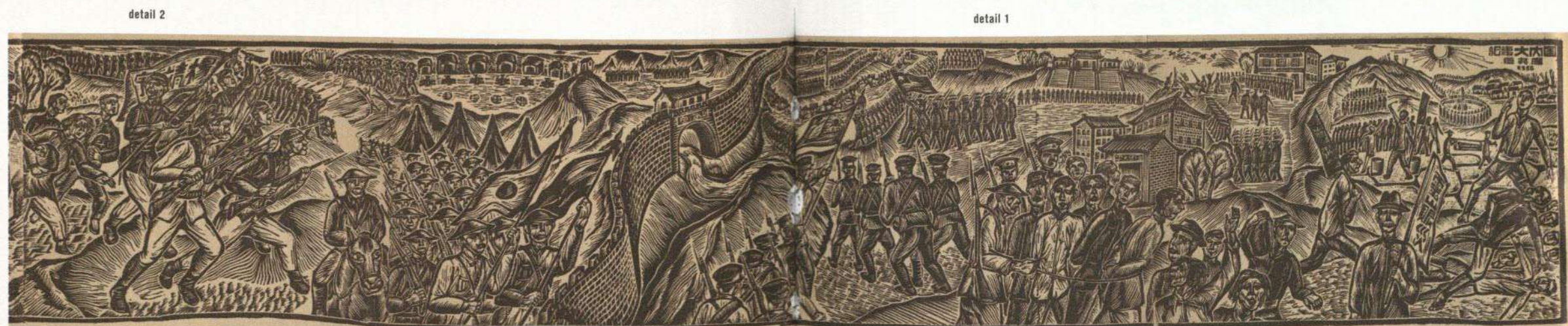


PLATE 9 Tang Yingwei, A Record of Major National Events, 1936, woodcut.





PLATE 10 Li Hua, *Roar, China!*, 1935, woodcut.



36 Christian Rohlf, *The Prisoner*, 1918, woodcut.

37 Chen Puzhi (Lanjia), *Rickshaw Puller*, 1934, woodcut.





that reflected the lasting fascination that writers, artists, and editors in Shanghai had maintained for the Belgian printmaker's black-and-white images since the mid-1920s.<sup>83</sup>

Lu Xun chose to introduce Masereel's 1918 work *The Passion of One Man*, a twenty-five-frame narrative of the life and death of a labor activist in a European industrial city. Three images from this narrative had appeared in the November 1932 issue of *Literary Monthly*, a Zuolian publication edited by Zhou Yang (1908–1989). The same monthly also included an essay by Lu Xun, in which he defended pictorial narratives as a viable and useful form of public culture. In his introduction to the Liangyou volume, Lu Xun expounded on the effect of pictorial narratives by relating it to that of cinema. He then offered a frame-by-frame interpretation of Masereel's story, underscoring its intent as social protest.<sup>84</sup>

In his introduction to *The Sun* (its Chinese title was expanded to mean "The Pursuit of Light"), Ye Lingfeng included a description of the technique of wood engraving. He mentioned Eric Gill, Clare Leighton, Robert Gibbings, Rockwell Kent, Käthe Kollwitz, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff as noteworthy contemporary woodcut artists and offered a summary of what one might find in Masereel: "Such are his favorite themes: crying masses of the street, crowded urban scenes, speeding cars, ports, taverns, and the unconscious deep in the dreams of every human being."<sup>85</sup> Lu Xun and Ye Lingfeng may have commented on different aspects of Masereel's work, but they were both appreciative of the social-democratic politics dramatically expressed in his distinct black-and-white prints.

Yu Dafu and Zhao Jiabi, in their introductions to *My Book of Hours* and *Story without Words*, respectively, further affirmed the social relevance of Masereel and directly tackled the question of intelligibility. They each offered a detailed interpretation of the narratives they discussed and took the opportunity to defend the form of the pictorial narrative itself. Yu Dafu paid special tribute to Masereel's simple, yet passionate storytelling, observing that the artist's works "plead for the proletariat, and are read by the illiterate." Their nature as "books for the public" made it significant that they were being reprinted in China.<sup>86</sup> For Zhao Jiabi, reprinting Masereel's narratives would help answer the question of whether or not woodcuts could become a form of public art. He expressed his hope that these examples would inspire Chinese artists in their effort to make art accessible. Acknowledging that Masereel's narratives might be hard to follow initially, Zhao nonetheless remarked that the woodcut as a visual medium would best fulfill the task of cultural dissemination.<sup>87</sup> What ought to be disseminated, he and the other three writers agreed, was a public culture as democratic in form as it was cosmopolitan in aspiration.

The appreciation accorded to Masereel through this publication project reinforced a socialist-cosmopolitan imagination that was part of the intellectual landscape of Shanghai at the time.<sup>88</sup> (The same socialist cosmopolitanism had generated widespread enthusiasm for the British playwright George Bernard Shaw [1856–1950] and turned his February 1933 visit to Shanghai into a major cultural event that brought together Song Qingling [1893–1981], esteemed widow of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, Cai Yuanpei, and Lu Xun. It had also mobilized literary groups to welcome a much younger Langston Hughes [1902–1967] in July.<sup>89</sup> Both vis-

its were covered in *Modern Age*, with the August issue introducing the American poet as "a revolutionary black writer [and] featured contributor to the American monthly *New Masses*." The monthly *Literature*, which had quickly emerged as a formidable competitor to Shi Zhecun's *Modern Age*, also devoted significant space to introducing Hughes.)

That an uninitiated reader might not appreciate the visual idiom of a Masereel story was clearly of concern to Lu Xun. When discussing pictorial narratives on a separate occasion, he had suggested two basic approaches for the Chinese artist interested in the form to take: first, the material ought to be taken from Chinese history and be about characters already known to the public; second, the drawing should use traditional methods and stay clear of the impressionistic style that was then popular. He suggested further that line-based drawings were preferable to the tonal masses and chiaroscuro effects of Western-style woodblock prints. Ultimately, the pictorial narrative's graphics should be intelligible and self-evident even to a person without any formal training.<sup>90</sup> Largely on this account, Lu Xun would always argue that pictorial representationalism facilitated viewer recognition and identification more effectively than abstract or expressionist-style images.<sup>91</sup> The worst that could happen to a pictorial narrative, cautioned Lu Xun, was for the cultural elite to dismiss it as non-art and for the general public to reject it also for not making sense.

The Chinese reprints of Masereel's pictorial narratives brought to the fore the question of how to make a visual language that was at once foreign and presumably universal speak to a native audience. The two thousand volumes put out by the Liangyou Press in 1933 were by far the largest number of modern black-and-white woodblock prints made available for circulation at one time, and Lu Xun well knew that there would be no long lines of readers waiting to buy the wordless picture books.<sup>92</sup> Not only did they present the common reader with a largely strange format and visual experience, but they also contained serial images of foreign landscapes and subject matter. To Lu Xun and his cosmopolitan contemporaries, the refreshingly defamiliarizing elements of the modern woodcut were inseparable from the progressive social and cultural values they deemed desirable and wished to promote. In thinking about pictorial narratives as a visual art form addressed to the native general public, however, Lu Xun believed that local vocabulary and dialects had to be employed to ensure intelligibility.

Following the example of Masereel's picture books, a number of woodcut artists in Shanghai began developing pictorial narratives in the fall of 1933. Chen Tiegeng, for instance, created thirteen woodcut illustrations for a novella by Ding Ling. The artist sent a set to Lu Xun in October for his comments, and four images from the series would appear in the 1934 New Year's issue of *Modern Age*. In *Flood*, a series of twenty woodcuts, Zheng Yefu depicted a group of rural flood victims, followed their flight to a port city, and portrayed their newly acquired political consciousness and activism (see fig. 25).<sup>93</sup> In both sets of images, assertive, broad knife work, along with an interest in depicting urban crowds, pointed to a clear indebtedness to Masereel. Toward the end of 1933, Liu Xian at the Shanghai Meizhuan created a group of thirty-one prints as illustrations for Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*, a collection of his





38 Wen Tao, from *Death of Fifth Uncle*, 1933, woodcut.

poetic essays published in 1925. The intrepid young printmaker also engraved a portrait of the writer.<sup>94</sup> With this set of images, he initiated an enduring association between Lu Xun's literary works and woodblock prints as their most appropriate visual extension.

Among the makers of pictorial narratives from this period, Wen Tao (1907–1950), a native of Guangdong, showed the most obvious indebtedness to Masereel. The two comparatively long narratives that he created, *Death of Fifth Uncle* (thirty-four frames, 1933) and *Destruction* (forty-two frames, 1935), incorporate motifs, scenes, techniques, and narrative viewpoints that bear a clear relation to Masereel's prints (figs. 38 and 39).

The steady infusion of works by Masereel, the German expressionists, and other European and American printmakers in late 1933 had an impact that was immediate and far greater than Lu Xun could have anticipated it would be when he started reproducing foreign woodcuts and advocating an invigorating visual art in 1929. The woodcut now came to be appreciated broadly as a versatile, distinctive, and cosmopolitan visual art that best captured the raw forces and fantasies of the modern age (fig. 40). The medium also had a conceptual appeal because it embodied the artist's commitment to distilling his or her impressions of a

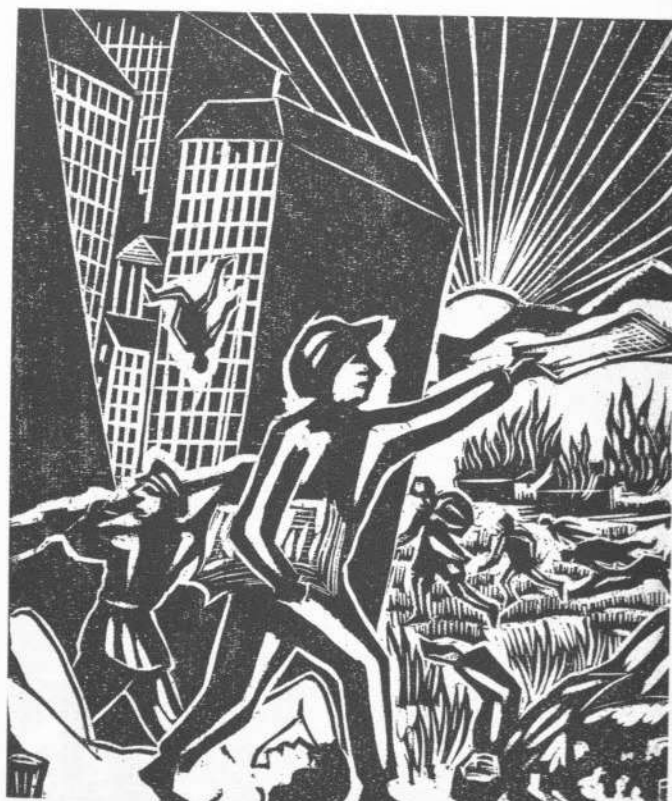


39 Frans Masereel, *The Siren*, 1928, woodcut.

40 Situ Zou, *Summer Storm*, 1933, woodcut.







41 Zhang Hui, *News*, 1935, woodcut.

changing world and rendering them in an illuminating language of contrasts. The vigorous aesthetic that Lu Xun identified in the modern woodcut was therefore as much the result of a penetrating vision as it was a product of the physical effort required to remove superfluous material from the woodblock's surface. It was this explicit valorization of perceptual depth that would inspire a group to name itself the Deep Engraving Print Making and Research Society (fig. 41).

As the woodcut gained greater recognition and currency, Lu Xun remained the spiritual patron and intellectual guide of the woodcut community in Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Beijing. A customary practice, not unlike the time-honored literati tradition of exchanging poems and paintings, was for aspiring artists to send their work to Lu Xun for endorsement. Lu Xun would invariably oblige with encouraging comments. He took it as his duty to support young artists working in an adverse political environment and to help extend their artistic vision and exposure. In addition, Lu Xun would often be regarded as an information center on the developing woodcut movement. In late spring 1933, for instance, a young man named Tang Ke (1913–?) from the inland province of Shanxi got in touch because he wanted to introduce woodcuts to his hometown.<sup>95</sup>

It was during this period that Lu Xun began to see even more relevance in graphic art from the contemporary Soviet Union. Through the Zuolian, he had established contact with printmakers in Moscow and sent them Chinese rice paper in exchange for original prints.

On October 14 and 15, 1933, he exhibited about forty Soviet and German woodblock prints from his own collection in a vacant apartment next to his residence.<sup>96</sup> Many of the visitors to the exhibition were local woodcut artists, to whom Lu Xun offered copies of an illustration by Nikolai Piskarev for *The Iron Flood* by Aleksandr Serafimovich (1863–1949).<sup>97</sup> Pleased with the success of the exhibition, Lu Xun put together a second one in December. Most of the book illustrations on display were works by Soviet artists, but some French bookplates and illustrations were added to divert the watchful authorities, as Lu Xun told a friend at the time.<sup>98</sup> With the exception of Käthe Kollwitz, Lu Xun would become gradually disenchanted with the German expressionists, and would complain in private that the editors of *Literature* had limited themselves too narrowly to the German school.<sup>99</sup>

Lu Xun's embrace of Soviet graphic art reflected his appreciation of the more refined wood engraving as well as his political orientation. In exquisite images that either exalt the power of the ordinary worker or celebrate gigantic industrialization projects, he found an inspiring and pleasing visual art committed to a positive cause. The prints both evoked and vindicated an exhilarating vision of socialist modernity. Like many of his contemporaries on the left, Lu Xun viewed the Soviet Union with admiration and would not hesitate to defend it as an unprecedented social experiment. This conviction certainly agreed with his public image as the foremost progressive and best-respected writer in China, an image confirmed by his association with the Zuolian. It was in this capacity that Lu Xun would meet, in September 1933, Paul Vaillant-Couturier (1892–1937), editor of the left-wing journal *L'humanité* and president of the French Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR). A published writer of children's literature, Vaillant-Couturier was also a key leader of the French Communist Party in the 1930s. He had come to Shanghai to attend the international Far Eastern Antiwar Congress and made a point of meeting Lu Xun soon after his arrival. The highly symbolic meeting took place in the apartment of Harold Isaacs (1910–1986), a young American journalist and editor of *China Forum*, which as a Shanghai-based English periodical had since 1932 presented a sympathetic voice in support of the left-wing literary and artistic movements in China. To this meeting, Lu Xun brought his copy of *Hans ohne Brot* (a German edition of the French writer's children's story) and received the following dedication on its inside cover: "À M. Lu Sing avec toute ma cordiale sympathie. Vaillant-Couturier, 5 Sept. 1933."<sup>100</sup>

The Far Eastern Antiwar Congress, organized by the underground CCP and held in Shanghai on September 30 against government prohibitions, attested to a new internationalism that forged political alliances among anti-imperialist causes in various national contexts.<sup>101</sup> Logically extending the premises of a socialist cosmopolitanism, the new internationalist solidarity spoke loudly to the Chinese cultural left wing, which championed the popular resistance against Japanese aggression as an integral part of a global anti-imperialist and antifascist movement. While preparations were secretly under way for the congress, left-wing theater groups publicly produced *Roar, China!*, a renowned play by the Soviet poet and playwright Sergei Tret'iakov (1892–1939), to mark the second anniversary of the Japanese seizure of Manchuria. Before he returned to Paris in early October, Vaillant-Couturier met a group



of filmmakers and critics and, at Shi Zhecun's invitation, wrote an open letter to the Chinese intelligentsia. The letter, in which Vaillant-Couturier asserted that socialist culture was China's only gospel, was accompanied by a sketch of the French writer by Xu Xingzhi when its censored version appeared in the November issue of *Modern Age*.<sup>102</sup>

In all likelihood, Vaillant-Couturier's wife Ida Treat (1889–1978), an American journalist and a reporter for the Paris magazine *Vu*, was also present at Lu Xun's meeting with Vaillant-Couturier.<sup>103</sup> During the following two months, Treat (known in Chinese as Mrs. Tan) was in touch with Lu Xun and talked about her idea of exhibiting representative works by left-wing Chinese artists in Paris. From there, she wanted to take the show to Moscow. She asked Lu Xun to help her by contacting appropriate artists in Shanghai and collecting quality artwork.

Intrigued by the proposed exhibition, Lu Xun wrote to Chen Tiegeng on December 4 and asked him to spread the word. The plan was that all items should arrive at the Uchiyama Bookstore by December 15 in order for Lu Xun to forward them to Mrs. Tan.<sup>104</sup> Upon receiving the letter, Chen Tiegeng contacted woodcut artists at the Shanghai Meizhuan and the New China Yizhuan, as well as those scattered in the French Concession and the Hongkou district. Soon, nearly two hundred woodblock prints had been collected.<sup>105</sup> Lu Xun did not seem particularly concerned that no other medium was represented. Immature as they were, he believed these works would not draw scorn from overseas viewers as they might from the grand masters in China.<sup>106</sup> On December 16, a bundle of woodblock prints was delivered to Lu Xun, although he had by then lost contact with Treat.<sup>107</sup>

Lu Xun nonetheless made a selection of works for an exhibition in Paris. (Among the selection were woodcuts that had been sent to him directly rather than via the bookstore.) He then turned to the translator and future playwright Yao Ke (1904–?) for help. Since November 1932, Yao Ke had been in regular contact with Lu Xun because he was collaborating with the American journalist Edgar Snow (1905–1972) on a project to translate Lu Xun's fiction into English. When Lu Xun wrote on January 5, 1934, with regard to the woodcuts he had collected, Yao Ke and Snow were both in Beiping. Lu Xun was hoping to obtain Treat's address in France from Snow, believing he would probably know the whereabouts of his fellow American and ideological comrade.<sup>108</sup> In his reply, Yao Ke provided English translations of all titles as well as Treat's contact information. On January 17, Lu Xun put in the mail a total of fifty-eight woodblock prints, although it is not clear whether the package was sent directly to Paris or elsewhere.

Meanwhile, in Paris the secretary of the AEAR paid a visit to the Galerie Billiet–Pierre Vorms to inquire whether the gallery would be interested in exhibiting a collection of paintings and prints by revolutionary artists in China that would soon be arriving. Pierre Vorms, director of the gallery and Frans Masereel's exclusive French publisher at the time, was willing to consider it, provided that the quality of the works was satisfactory. A second meeting soon followed, to which Vaillant-Couturier and another AEAR representative brought about ninety items, including fifty-eight woodblock prints, fourteen rolled-up oil paintings, one



42 Zhang Wang, *Wounded Head*, 1934, woodcut.

large mural, and some fifteen drawings and scrolls. The works were said to have come from multiple sources, and their exact provenance was not explained to Vorms, who nonetheless found the works exciting enough to warrant an exhibition.<sup>109</sup> The fourteen oil paintings were signed by three artists, but no other names were given for the rest of the collection. The presence of the mural *Today's World* indicates that some of the works came from left-wing artists based in Beiping.

On March 14, 1934, the exhibition *Painters and Printmakers from Revolutionary China* opened at the Galerie Billiet–Pierre Vorms on rue la Boétie and, in the following two weeks, attracted a large number of visitors as well as an array of reviews. This was the first known exhibition of modern Chinese woodblock prints outside China, and the tortuous path that led these works from Shanghai and Beiping to Paris attested to the existence of a global network fostered by the left-wing internationalist united front of the 1930s. The exhibition functioned more like a statement on the political situation in China than a showcase of the latest artistic achievements there (fig. 42).

The exhibition catalogue opened with a brief statement by the AEAR, which presented the artwork on view as a testimony to the daily struggle for liberation undertaken by the multitudes of Chinese workers. Vowing that "their struggles and their aspirations are also ours," the AEAR condemned the fascist terror instigated by the Nationalist Party and saluted the Chinese artists for having created works with "a moving simplicity and a true revolutionary grandeur." The statement also explained that none of the items on display was for sale, because the Chinese comrades had requested that the exhibition travel to other cities in Europe and all over the world to broadcast their cause.<sup>110</sup>

The catalogue also contained a statement titled "Manifesto of the League of Revolutionary Artists in China." Asserting that a fierce confrontation between classes had moved Chinese



art from a struggle over form to that over ideology, the group identified itself as "young Chinese artists who have made their art a weapon in the class war and have united to create a proletarian culture." Their battle was both against "the aesthetic culture of capitalism" and for a new aesthetic based on dialectical materialism, they explained; in the process, they had found it necessary to address the question of traditional art and its political economy. Their commitment to creating a new art with revolutionary content justified the adoption of an international style based on techniques developed in Western painting:

Traditional Chinese art is no longer practiced except by bourgeois artists who, under the catchphrase "national essence," try to keep alive the remnants of feudal and capitalist culture.

We have all learned the techniques of Chinese art, its characteristics and chiaroscuro, and we accept it under certain conditions. But we believe that, as far as instruments and materials are concerned, the backward condition of production in China has hindered the development of Chinese art. We must adopt means used in Western art and methods developed there; we must study and acquire, as far as possible, the most advanced techniques from the West, in order to express the social reality and phenomena of modern China and the revolutionary sentiment of the Chinese proletariat.

The manifesto went on to state that the League of Revolutionary Artists in China had organized exhibitions, launched publications in cities, and worked with other groups for a common goal, and it was ready to collaborate with artistic and cultural organizations around the world for the same noble cause. Finally, the manifesto urged visitors to consider the current exhibition as a window onto the society in which revolutionary Chinese artists lived.<sup>111</sup>

Between the AEAR statement and the manifesto was an untitled essay by the well-traveled journalist Andrée Viollis (1879–1950), who in 1935 would publish an influential book called *Indochine S.O.S.* to denounce French colonialism in Vietnam.<sup>112</sup> (Her second husband, Jean Viollis [1877–1932], was the innovative inaugural curator of the Musée Cernuschi, which housed one of the finest collections of Asian art in Paris.) In her essay, Andrée Viollis described her emotional reaction when she previewed the exhibition, which had come "from so far away to speak to us, to enlighten us, to convince us." She was instantly reminded, she wrote, of crowded streets, noisy shops, muddy rivers, toiling coolies, sad tunes, and a piercing odor of "pepper, opium, misery." To her, the nameless but evocative and determined Chinese artists did not belong to any particular school, although they came close, in both inspiration and technique, to certain contemporary masters in the West. With abundant passion, she wrote, they had created testimonials illustrating their continual struggle and suffering. In Viollis's view, these poignant visual testimonies constituted a "journalisme pictural" that, by virtue of its absolute passion for truth and lack of concern for pleasing form, attained the highest plane of art.

Andrée Viollis's moving account seemed to set the generally sympathetic tone with which the exhibition was received. About a dozen French newspapers and journals, in addition to

Vaillant-Couturier's *L'humanité* and Henri Barbusse's weekly *Le monde*, covered the exhibition. Reviewers with different backgrounds and persuasions all saw in the collection a country in turmoil and appreciated the artists' engagement (if not always their level of refinement). Some made particularly sharp observations about the woodcuts, discussing their features and their implications in a manner not yet seen among Chinese art critics and reviewers. "Painters of a troubled time, these Chinese are workers who evidently do not make a living with their paintings," remarked a commentator in *Paris-Midi*.

They paint when they can, where they can, sometimes between bursts of machine guns as their flimsy living quarters are shaken by the civil war. Their paintings are reportage, offering vivid, almost always tragic, images of the street. In broad strokes—if their art is rough, it is very expressive—they depict people in misery, a strike, marching peasants, the revolution, a worker, coolies, the white terror.<sup>113</sup>

The reviewer for *Beaux-Arts* noticed in the young Chinese painters and printmakers the same animating spirit once possessed by "les artistes primitifs": "The desire to work anonymously for 'the cause' is never far from the intention to create images agreeable to God, an intention that possessed these artists, who do not even sign their works." Whereas the art critic of *Les hommes du jour* was impressed by "a sober and profound eloquence," the commentator of *Le mercure de France* expressed a deep concern: "One is afraid that these revolutionary Chinese are going against their intentions as propagandists. They want to break with the political and artistic traditions of old China. We do not know if politics in China is going to improve, but its art seems to be disappearing." Even less pleased was the art historian Paul Fierens (1895–1957), who through his *Journal des débats* lamented the "melodramatic declamations" in the woodcuts and accused their creators of "knowing no more than to plagiarize Masereel and search for a brutal and vulgar effect in their miserably botched works. Besides, these unknowns presented by the Galerie Billiet-Vorms have nothing Chinese about them, and they revolutionize neither painting nor xylography."<sup>114</sup>

None of these responses, critical or appreciative, was relayed to Lu Xun or his young artist friends back in Shanghai. For a long time, Lu Xun was not even sure whether the proposed show had taken place. Finally, in June 1934, he told a friend that an American had heard from a German about the Paris exhibition, and that it had been well received. Lu Xun also heard from a Russian contact that the exhibition was a success in Moscow.<sup>115</sup> In mid-October 1934, Lu Xun received an encouraging letter from the AEAR that officially acknowledged the exhibition, although the political situation in Shanghai was such that it was impossible to publish such a sensitive document.<sup>116</sup>

Had he been kept up to date, Lu Xun would have been gratified to learn that after leaving the Galerie Billiet–Pierre Vorms, the exhibition traveled to Lyon, where it was on display at the Palais Municipal at the quai de Bondy from April 14 to May 29, 1934. He would have learned that a gentleman from Denmark expressed interest in moving the entire show





43 Cover of *Woodcuts by the Unnamed Woodcut Society* (1934), with woodcut attributed to Huang Xinbo.

to Copenhagen, but shortly before the scheduled opening there in February 1935, the secretary of the AEAR informed Vorms that the collection had to be returned to its proprietors without delay.<sup>117</sup> Contrary to what Lu Xun was led to believe, however, this sizable collection never made it to the Soviet Union. Once they left Vorms's custody, the ninety items would never be seen again.

Lu Xun would have been especially pleased with the Chinese title of the Paris exhibition: *New Art of Revolutionary China*. He might have suggested that the reportedly revolutionary China was more accurately silent due to political repression, but he would have agreed that the most promising new art there was best represented by the woodblock prints that formed the largest component of the exhibition. To him, the modern woodcut, in reviving an exhausted native tradition and heralding a public art, demonstrated an unparalleled vitality and constituted a positive avant-garde movement. In an extraordinary coincidence, on the same day that the Paris exhibition opened, Lu Xun wrote to endorse a new volume of woodcuts, published by the Unnamed Woodcut Society, which had been formed by Liu Xian and Huang Xinbo at the Shanghai Meizhuan in November 1933 (fig. 43).

As for the less sympathetic Parisian reviewers, Lu Xun would have found their criticisms provocative and worthy of a response. He would certainly have countered that no other artistic form or practice, in his view, possessed the same revolutionary potential in China as did those woodblock prints, crude and immature as they might have been. As an explicitly political art, the woodcuts delivered their impact by challenging the prevalent ways of seeing and by introducing a fresh idiom and subject matter. Nonetheless, Lu Xun would have readily agreed that the Chinese artists had a long way to go toward a distinct style of their own.



44 Chen Yanqiao, *Going to Work*, ca. 1934, woodcut.

One necessary task was for artists to learn from the native tradition, which was eclectic. He had frequently urged his young artist friends to study folk art, traditional printmaking, and stone engraving from the past; he had also admonished them to make their Chinese subjects look Chinese. The more "local color" a print or a short story captured, he advised Chen Yanqiao in April 1934, the broader the appeal it would have around the world, leading to the possibility of greater attention from abroad (figs. 44 and 45).<sup>118</sup>

That a reviewer should have failed to see anything Chinese about the woodcuts, Lu Xun might have further suggested, probably owed a great deal to a set perception and viewing habit. Paul Fierens's irritable response, which was diametrically opposed to that of Andrée Viollis, may have risen from frustrated expectations. In fact, less than a year before the Billiet-Vorms exhibition, museum-goers and art critics in Paris had been treated to a very different presentation of Chinese paintings. Masterminded and curated by Xu Beihong in collaboration with André Dezarrois (1890–?), a noted museum curator in Paris, the grand *Exhibition*





45 Wozha, Drought, ca. 1935, woodcut.

of *Chinese Painting* presented more than eighty classics, some of them on loan from the Musée du Louvre and the Musée Guimet, and close to two hundred more recent paintings, most of which were in the tradition of literati painting.<sup>119</sup> This was the first large-scale presentation of modern Chinese art in Paris; its title in Chinese was simply *Chinese Fine Arts*. Xu Beihong's idea was to demonstrate the renaissance of a Chinese national art in the modern age. With a catalogue featuring a preface by the renowned poet Paul Valéry (1871–1945), the exhibition opened at the Musée du Jeu de Paume on May 10, 1933. Among the hundreds of visitors attending the opening ceremony were the Chinese ambassador, the foreign and education ministers of the French government, museum directors, politicians, artists, journalists, and other notables. The well-respected critic Camille Mauclair (1872–1945) sought out Xu Beihong from among the crowd to congratulate him and in the following days would publish several articles in the *Figaro* and other major newspapers to express his excitement over the unprecedented event. According to Xu Beihong's prideful report, the exhibition drew some thirty thousand visitors and generated more than three hundred press reviews.<sup>120</sup>

Just as a world of difference existed between the exhibition at the Musée du Jeu de Paume and that at the Galerie Billiet–Pierre Vorms the following year, so a profound gap, ideo-

logical as well as sociological, separated the art establishment and the nascent woodcut community in China. Thrown into sharp relief by these two exhibitions was the divergence between art as a cultural tradition and institution on the one hand and art as direct political expression and intervention on the other. To Lu Xun, it was clear which exhibition represented the more truthful and therefore more powerful art produced in contemporary China. It was also clear which artists were harbingers of the art of the future.

(Coincidentally, *Painters and Printmakers from Revolutionary China* opened at the Galerie Billiet–Pierre Vorms at the same time a significantly larger exhibition of contemporary Japanese woodblock prints, *Modern Japanese Prints and Their Origins*, was going on at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. From February to April 1934, the exhibition, sponsored by the Japan Print Society, displayed more than four hundred modern *sōsaku-hanga* works and over three hundred older prints. In preparing for its first large-scale exhibition abroad, members of the Japan Print Society had had a heated debate over what to present and had decided against including *shin-hanga*, a formulaic and heavily commercialized genre of prints that catered to a set European perception of Japan. Parisian critics' reaction to the exhibition had telling parallels to the comments generated by the Chinese woodcuts, with some preferring the older prints and others appreciating new creations for their modern spirit.<sup>121</sup>)

After Paris, the exhibition curated by Xu Beihong would travel across Europe from the summer of 1933 to the following summer, thereby bringing Chinese art, as he put it in retrospect, to the "five most civilized countries: France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Russia."<sup>122</sup> In the meantime, another Europe-bound exhibition of Chinese fine arts was being organized in Shanghai in the fall of 1933. However, controversy soon erupted over how the government-sponsored exhibition in Berlin had been assembled. Charging that Liu Haisu had overstepped his role as a member of the preparatory committee and made too narrow a selection based on his personal preferences, a group of distinguished artists presented petitions first to the Executive Yuan of the central government and then to the Ministry of Education. They demanded that a nationwide, better-supervised selection be conducted and that Liu Haisu's pending departure for Germany be postponed.<sup>123</sup> Still traveling in Europe, Xu Beihong also voiced his displeasure and suggested a jury comprised of prominent artists, such as Huang Binhong, be appointed.<sup>124</sup> On November 11, a two-day preview of the exhibition opened after Cai Yuanpei weighed in and vouched that no individual had monopolized the event, which was designed to showcase modern Chinese art.<sup>125</sup> Four days later, Liu Haisu boarded an Italian post ship with about four hundred pieces of artwork, accompanied by the new Chinese ambassador to Germany. By then, Adolf Hitler had been in power for almost a year and the Nazi government had just ominously withdrawn from the League of Nations.

Lu Xun was aware of the controversy surrounding Liu Haisu and the Berlin exhibition. He became skeptical after learning that the presentation contained nothing but traditional *guohua* paintings. "Present-day Chinese paintings cannot but be an impoverished affair," he remarked in a private letter. "But since the Europeans are not used to them and do not know any better, this trip probably will result in another 'triumphant return,' just like what Xu



Beihong has achieved in France."<sup>126</sup> (In November 1933, Xu Beihong had serialized his account of the Paris exhibition in a major Shanghai newspaper.<sup>127</sup>)

Meanwhile, from January to March 1934, as Hitler further tightened his grip on Germany, Liu Haisu oversaw the successful exhibition of modern Chinese art in Berlin. (This was, in fact, the second time that Liu Haisu had brought an exhibition of Chinese paintings to Germany. In March 1931, during his extended tour of Europe, Liu had organized the modest *Exhibition of Contemporary Chinese Painters* at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, with twenty-three out of the one hundred items being his own work.<sup>128</sup>) The Berlin exhibition, organized by the Society for East Asiatic Art and the Akademie der Künste with financial backing from the Chinese government, contained more than 270 paintings. Of the more than 150 contemporary and late-imperial artists whose work was featured in the exhibition, only Liu Haisu and Huang Binhong had the distinction of being represented by six pieces each. The exhibition was a remarkable success and stimulated widespread interest among the general public, which, observed one contemporary commentator, seemed more receptive to the unfamiliar artistic tradition than the learned experts.<sup>129</sup> The official catalogue carried a preface by Cai Yuanpei and an essay by Liu Haisu on "the current direction of Chinese painting and its origin."<sup>130</sup>

In March, while the show curated by Liu Haisu was still going on in Berlin, Xu Beihong arrived in Germany with his own exhibition, heading to Frankfurt and staying there for two weeks before returning to Rome. By October, Liu Haisu had traveled with his exhibition through Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, and Geneva and was transporting it to London, where it was scheduled to open as *Exhibition of Modern Chinese Art* at the New Burlington Galleries in February 1935.<sup>131</sup> From there, the show would go to Prague in April.

Lu Xun would remain rather indifferent toward all these official and quasi-official programs aimed at showcasing Chinese painting as a unique national cultural heritage. His nonchalance came from the conviction that the ink-and-brush painting of the literati tradition was institutionally elitist, conceptually ill-prepared to represent daily life, and therefore incapable of expressing the realities and visions of a contemporary society that must acknowledge the presence of the masses. He did not see an oil painting, given its rarefied status and equally elitist associations, as being conducive to the making of a public art either. Furthermore, in Lu Xun's view, the apparently innocuous act of promoting an elitist tradition as the national form had the political consequence of suppressing other emerging, more expressive, and more democratic artistic forms and practices. He therefore would often ally himself with the woodcut artists and adopt an oppositional stance to the so-called grand masters—upholders as much as beneficiaries of the existing hierarchy in the field of art.

In March 1934, still not clear about the fate of the fifty-eight prints that he had sent to be exhibited in Paris, Lu Xun undertook a publishing project to keep the woodcut movement from losing its momentum. He decided to collect and circulate the best works created by contemporary woodcut artists, both to generate more publicity for the new art and to document its achievements. While waiting for artists outside Shanghai to send in their wood-



46 Chen Tiegeng, *Mother and Son*, 1933, woodcut.

blocks over the next two months, Lu Xun had a chance to discuss with Chen Yanqiao, his main contact for this project, how to give the new publication a broad appeal. It was a discussion about the future of the movement as well. Lu Xun cautioned against a tendency among young artists to compensate for their technical insufficiency with provocative posturing, and noted that he was perturbed by the poor artistic quality of a majority of the prints he had at hand.<sup>132</sup>

Lu Xun decided to name the selection of twenty-four prints *Progress in Woodcuts* and listed as its publisher the fictive Iron and Wood Art Society. He was particularly fond of the last woodblock that had arrived, *Mother and Son* by Chen Tiegeng (fig. 46).<sup>133</sup> In his preface, he attributed the inception of the creative woodcut in contemporary China to European influences that had been systematically introduced by the Morning Flowers Society in 1929, and stressed the fact that the movement initially had little to do with the once-impressive native tradition. He then remarked that the two main resources for the new art would be contemporary works from Europe and the United States on the one hand and ancient stone engravings from China on the other. Such helpful materials, he noted, were being made available. Indeed, Lu Xun himself had recently sponsored two publications so as to present contemporary Soviet wood engravings as well as traditional Chinese prints to a broader audience.<sup>134</sup>

Lu Xun's brief preface to *Progress in Woodcuts* offers one of the earliest narratives of the unfolding woodcut movement. It is also a tale of spiritual resilience, repeatedly evoked as the



identity of the movement and its opposition to two main adversaries were defined. One of these adversaries was the art establishment and grand masters who showed nothing but disdain for the lowly medium;<sup>135</sup> the other, much darker force was political in nature. In defying and persevering against contempt and oppression, Lu Xun offered, young woodcut artists "have not only won the sympathy of Chinese readers, but also come so far as to take a first step to the outside world."<sup>136</sup> Their work promised a genuinely new art because it sought to address a new public that had never been fully appreciated before—a public that was at once national and international, bound by a shared political identity. On this account, the woodcut movement was as much an artistic avant-garde as it was part of a political vanguard.





# 5

## The Avant-Garde and the National Imaginary

With a few engraving knives and one block of wood, many art objects can be made and circulated among the public—such is the modern woodcut. . . . Vigorous and striking, new-style woodcuts are a new art for the young; they are also a good art for the public.

Lu Xun, Preface to *Woodcuts by the Unnamed Woodcut Society*, 1934

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In June 1935, Lu Xun wrote yet another preface to a volume of contemporary woodcuts, in which he further defended the creative woodcut as heralding an expressive and innovative public art. He underscored the challenges presented to the established aesthetic order by the rediscovered artistic medium and its new cultural associations. Printmaking as a native art went back to much earlier times and had always been associated with popular cultural forms, Lu Xun observed, but the woodcut movement had recently ushered in radically new values and directions. By giving expression to “the same inner needs shared by the printmakers and the public,” the modern woodcut served a unique function and had gathered irrepressible energy. What the young artists succeeded in expressing through their prints, he claimed, was “the ardent sincerity of an art apprentice, therefore often the soul of modern society”; their impassioned artwork was far from what the traditional literati would appreciate as “elegant” or “refined” (*ya*), but it could not be dismissed as “vulgar” or “lowbrow” (*su*) either. No woodblock print made in previous times, in Lu Xun’s view, had ever attained this provocative state where the conventional pair of aesthetic opposites was no longer applicable.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the literati’s disinterest in verisimilitude and quotidian trappings, the young woodcut artists found in representational realism a refreshing visual vocabulary that enabled them to register current events and depict human subjects. Their commitment to engaging contemporary life and to confronting social reality made it a central objective that they bring the underrepresented, or until now structurally invisible, masses to see themselves and their



lives represented in artwork for a revealing first time. Rather than displaying the vast majority of society as a passive or silent object, however, the woodcut artists also saw it as their task to speak for the toiling laborers and eventually to make them speak. It was this desire to represent the underrepresented collective as a subject-agent with its own voice that generated in the modern woodcut a new visual grammar and endowed the medium with political ramifications.

Lu Xun was not alone in appreciating the woodcut as an emerging public art with "a much brighter, more magnificent future" than other art forms. As we have seen, the art critic Feng Zikai, in 1934, also observed that woodblock prints embodied the defining qualities of a universal visual art of the future because they delivered an evocative revelation through intelligible yet stimulating form. Combining the strengths of Eastern and Western painting, the modern woodcut was at once cosmopolitan and proletarian. For Lu Xun, Feng Zikai, and the contemporary woodcut artists, "the public" meant the working masses that were not only a determining political force in modern society, but also a cultural potentiality, because they had yet to assert themselves as such in the realm of artistic and symbolic practices.

The occasion that led Lu Xun to compose his June 1935 preface was the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*, which opened in Beiping on New Year's Day 1935. The exhibition would subsequently travel to several major cities and eventually arrive in Shanghai in October, thus presenting modern Chinese woodblock prints to a national audience for the first time. Late in 1934, Lu Xun had read about a woodcut group in Beiping and Tianjin and its decision to organize a national event. Intrigued, he answered its public call for submissions by dispatching a copy of *Progress in Woodcuts*, which he had recently published, along with some thirty additional prints.<sup>2</sup> In mid-December, he would receive a letter and some very impressive prints from an artist named Li Hua, who would inform Lu Xun of the extraordinarily productive Modern Prints Society, based in Guangzhou. Indeed, during the second half of 1934, the new woodcut groups in both Beiping and Guangzhou were turning the woodcut movement into a truly national phenomenon.

The first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* had a far-reaching impact. It extended the appeal of the woodcut movement beyond the young artist community and helped to forge a national network of printmakers. In bringing hundreds of prints to an unprecedented number of viewers across the country, the exhibition demonstrated that the woodcut was a portable and expedient artistic medium. Taking advantage of existing cultural institutions and resources, the exhibition also set an ingenious precedent for organizing and winning support for large-scale, independent public art events. It would directly inspire the *Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition*, which originated in Guangzhou in July 1936. These two national exhibitions marked the beginning of the final and most productive phase of the woodcut movement before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937. The dynamic processes and rich achievements of this consummating stage are the focus of this chapter.

Lu Xun was deeply impressed by the scale and reach of the *National Joint Woodcut Exhi-*

*bition*. He concluded his preface to a commemorative volume from the exhibition with an optimistic vision for the future of the woodcut movement: "This selection is the first volume that gleams the best work from the entire country. This is the beginning rather than the end. It shows the march of a few vanguards, and hopefully they will be followed by an endless procession with flags so numerous that they block out the sky."<sup>3</sup> In simple and poetic language, Lu Xun described for the young woodcut artists a most gratifying relationship between an artistic endeavor and collective action, between the avant-garde and the general movement of history.

## FOR A PUBLIC ART OF THE NATION

A direct impetus for the woodcut movement in Beiping and Tianjin was the July 1933 exhibition of woodcuts and paintings at the Yiwen Middle School that, as we saw in chapter 4, reflected the aspirations of left-wing young artists in the area. An energetic new member of the Beiping Woodcut Research Society was Jin Zhaoye (1912–1995), who had taken part in the armed resistance against the Japanese annexation of Manchuria before arriving in Beiping. In the fall of 1933, he would submit his woodcut exercises and literary works to local newspapers, one of them being *Wild Grass*, the weekly magazine of the *Northern Star*, a daily newspaper controlled by the Northern Zuolian. In August 1934, Jin and Xu Lunyin (1914–1935), another self-taught woodcut artist, organized a show of paintings and prints by artists active in Beiping and Tianjin. The exhibition was sponsored by *Wild Grass* and took place once again at the Yiwen Middle School. One of the more notable visitors was Yu Dafu, who at the time held a teaching position in Beiping.

Following the exhibition, organizers of the event held two introductory seminars on the basics of printmaking, which led to the formation of the Beiping-Tianjin Woodcut Research Society in September 1934. Almost immediately, the group decided to organize a nationwide exhibition.<sup>4</sup> It wished, in its words, to sow broadly the seeds of the new art and satisfy growing public demand in the process. In October, the society issued its call for submissions through a series of Beiping-based newspapers, designating the *Northern Star* as the contact address.<sup>5</sup>

Lu Xun quickly responded to this published notice. Over a two-week period in November, using a pen name, he sent to the organizing committee in Beiping not just the thirty prints he included along with the copy of *Progress in Woodcuts*, but an additional two sets of prints that had come his way.<sup>6</sup> Upon receiving the close to one hundred prints, Tang Ke, a young writer from Shanxi and now a member of the exhibition's organizing collective, was overjoyed to recognize Lu Xun's handwriting. Xu Lunyin was the first to acknowledge the connection by sending samples of his work to Lu Xun for comments. On the same day, letters from Jin Zhaoye and the Beiping-Tianjin Woodcut Research Society also reached Lu Xun.



Asked whom he would recommend for the upcoming national exhibition, Lu Xun replied on December 18 that Guangdong had produced many good woodcut artists and that the best among them were Li Hua and Luo Qingzhen (1905–1942).<sup>7</sup>

Lu Xun had long appreciated Luo Qingzhen's work, but he had not heard of Li Hua or his Modern Prints Society until the very day he wrote to the group in Beiping. Deeply impressed by the three volumes of prints that Li Hua sent him, Lu Xun wrote back immediately, expressing his dismay at the lack of information on developments in other parts of the country. He singled out *Spring Scenes of the Country in Woodcuts* as Li Hua's best collection, describing it as "solid enough to compete with those well-known woodcut artists in modern Japan" (plate 5). He also remarked on the German influence in a second volume, *Vignettes*. Lu Xun then offered to recommend some of Li Hua's works to respectable journals in Shanghai and expressed hope that Li Hua's group in Guangzhou would develop into a central organization for coordinating the woodcut movement.<sup>8</sup>

By then, two of Li Hua's woodcuts had appeared in *Literary and Artistic Pictorial*, a journal recently launched by Ye Lingfeng and Mu Shiying (1912–1940) in Shanghai (fig. 47). Published on December 15, its second issue featured an article by Li Hua, in which he described the development of the woodcut in Guangzhou and reported the creation of the Modern Prints Society, based at the Guangzhou Municipal School of Fine Arts. He then described the society's activities and revealed its plan to organize a joint exhibition of woodcut artists in southern China.<sup>9</sup> In addition to his two, five more prints by other members of the society were reproduced in the same issue.

Li Hua had sent his report because he was encouraged by what he saw in the new *Literary and Artistic Pictorial*. He also wanted to inform its readers of what was happening outside Shanghai, where the woodcut movement had originated. To the journal's editors, Li Hua's submission and the accompanying prints came as a pleasant surprise. They remarked that the refreshing artwork from Guangzhou showed the great strides that had been made by Chinese woodcut artists in terms of technical sophistication.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the editors published a photograph of Li Hua and his fellow printmakers posing in front of some of their framed prints. (In the same insert is a photograph of Xu Xingzhi and Wu Yinxian [1900–1994], who had recently held a painting and photography show at the Shanghai YMCA.) Also included in this issue of *Literary and Artistic Pictorial* were five woodblock prints by Frans Masereel expressing the artist's nightmarish vision of the modern metropolis.

(Lu Xun may or may not have seen the latest issue of *Literary and Artistic Pictorial* when he wrote to Li Hua on December 18, but he was certainly aware of the journal itself. In fact, he had been rather underwhelmed by its much-trumpeted first issue and had written a satirical review in *China Daily* in October. In part, Lu Xun's blistering reaction had been triggered by the editors' policy statement, in which they claimed to proffer nothing more than lighthearted entertainment in an age dominated by serious issues. Lu Xun expressed amazement that woodcuts by a contemporary Japanese printmaker, Ryōji Chomei (1899–1982),



47 Cover of *Literary and Artistic Pictorial*, December 1934, with illustration by Zhou Duo.

that celebrated the recent Japanese military victory in Manchuria should be used to illustrate a story by a Chinese writer. He was further astonished that prints by Masereel should be used as illustrations for a story by Mu Shiying.<sup>11</sup>)

For Li Hua, the publication of his two prints in the Shanghai pictorial marked an artistic coming-of-age, although this was not the first time his work had been introduced to readers of the great city. In October 1929, when he was still known as Li Junying, two of his oil paintings had appeared in monochrome in *The Young Companion*. The popular magazine had devoted two full pages to presenting what it regarded as innovative oil paintings by the Youth Art Society from Guangzhou, furnishing the insert with a photograph of its five members, all graduates of the Guangzhou Municipal School of Fine Arts. Besides the two paintings by Li Hua, which displayed a clear indebtedness to Henri Matisse, the magazine also reproduced a self-portrait by Liang Yijian (?–1934) as a confident, palette-holding oil painter.



As a group fascinated with fauvism and modernist art in general, the Youth Art Society (known as the Wild Grass Society at its formation in 1927) published two short-lived journals to advocate their views on art and held several exhibitions before dispersing.<sup>12</sup>

In the fall of 1930, Li Hua and Liang Yijian left for Japan to study oil painting. While he attended the Kawabata Painting School, she entered the Tokyo Women's Academy of Fine Arts. Within a year, the Manchurian Incident took place and the young artist couple returned to China, along with many other Chinese students, in protest against the Japanese seizure of Manchuria. After landing in Shanghai, they stayed briefly in the Hongkou district (in fact, on the same street where Lu Xun was living), where they witnessed the terror and destruction wrought by the first Shanghai war in late January 1932. The experience would haunt Li Hua for a long time and eventually motivate him to make, in 1936, a ninety-frame woodcut narrative titled *Dawn* in memory of the resistance put up by the Nineteenth Route Army and volunteers.<sup>13</sup>

Not until the beginning of 1934, when Liang Yijian died of an illness, did Li Hua switch from oils to printmaking. By then, he had returned to his alma mater to assume a teaching position and had finally obtained from Japan several introductory books on an art form that had always spoken strongly to him. His early prints showed the influence of contemporary Japanese *sōsaku-hanga* (an aspect that Lu Xun would notice right away). In June 1934, Li Hua exhibited on the campus of the Guangzhou Municipal School of Fine Arts a variety of prints, in color as well as black and white, that he had made as an expression of his grief for and remembrance of Liang Yijian.<sup>14</sup> The exhibition drew great attention, especially from Li Hua's students, and resulted in the formation of the Modern Prints Society (figs. 48 and 49). By the time Li Hua contacted *Literary and Artistic Pictorial* in November 1934, the Modern Prints Society had organized three exhibitions and put out two issues of *Woodcut Weekly* as a supplement to a Guangzhou newspaper. In mid-December, Li Hua and members of the society published the first volume of the journal *Modern Prints* with a press run of five hundred copies, one of which reached Lu Xun on December 29. Three days later, the first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* opened inside the Grand Temple in the city of Beiping.

About six hundred prints by more than ninety contemporary woodcut artists had been amassed by the Beiping-Tianjin Woodcut Research Society for the exhibition.<sup>15</sup> Woodcut groups active in cities including Shanghai, Beiping, Ji'nan, Wuhan, and Hong Kong were represented, and the Modern Prints Society alone contributed one hundred and fifty prints (fig. 50).<sup>16</sup> The exhibition also included sixty rare traditional woodblock prints (on loan from Zheng Zhenduo) and about seventy reproductions of foreign prints (one of them an etching by Albrecht Dürer). Moreover, manuals and reference books on printmaking, most of them in foreign languages, as well as a set of tools made by a local artisan were on display. A large banner hanging outside the Grand Temple was designed by Xu Lunyin, who for the occasion created a calligraphic style that suggested the jagged cuts of a chisel. An estimated five thousand visitors showed up on the opening day, and the enthusiastic public response kept the exhibition open until January 10.



48 Li Hua, *Road Worker at Rest*, 1934, woodcut.



49 Vasily Kasian, *Workers in the West (Breaktime)*, 1926, woodcut.





50 Duan Ganqing, *Feeding Pigs*, 1934, woodcut.

From the beginning, the organizers of the exhibition had sought a broad cultural and institutional legitimacy for their enterprise. Besides issuing a well-publicized call for submissions, they formed a ten-member jury that included Zheng Zhenduo, the writer Shen Congwen, the artist Situ Qiao, the European-trained aesthete Zhu Guangqian (1897–1986), and even a German professor teaching at Peking University. They also raised funds from private donors. Both practices were innovations in the brief history of woodcut exhibitions, and they established the exhibition as a mainstream art event instead of an oppositional or even underground political statement.

As a result, the exhibition succeeded in attracting a wide range of viewers. On January 17, 1935, in another pioneering move, Jin Zhaoye took the main content of the exhibition to nearby Tianjin, beginning a multicity tour that would culminate in Shanghai ten months later. The *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* thus became a traveling exhibition and, just as the organizers had hoped, sowed the seeds of the new art across eastern and central China.

By April 1935, the exhibition had left Tianjin and arrived in Ji'nan, capital of Shandong province, where Jin Zhaoye worked with the local artist Wang Shaoluo to arrange a four-day presentation at the YMCA.<sup>17</sup> From there, the exhibition headed southwest to Hankou, a political and industrial center west of Nanjing on the Yangtze River, where it was on display from May 12 to 19 at the marketplace for domestic products. Three months later, Tang Ke brought the show to Shanxi, his home province north of the Yellow River, and was proud to

see it open for seven days in the capital city of Taiyuan. Many citizens of that landlocked city were just as excited to have their first encounter with such a massive show of modern art.<sup>18</sup>

At every stop of the tour, the exhibition organizers offered introductory seminars on printmaking and contacted local artists. Their effort to promote the woodcut was aided by enthusiastic newspaper coverage along the way. According to one account, about forty special newspaper supplements on printmaking appeared during this period, and the total number of viewers of the exhibition in various cities was estimated at 100,000.<sup>19</sup> On May 1, for instance, Tang Ke started a biweekly supplement to *Yongbao* in Tianjin titled *Contemporary Woodcuts*, in which he updated readers on the national tour. The supplement also included reproductions of prints and review articles and was the venue where Lu Xun's preface to the exhibition's commemorative catalogue was first published.<sup>20</sup>

In mid-September, Jin Zhaoye and Tang Ke arrived in what was to be the final destination of the exhibition, Shanghai. Having just scored a series of successes over the course of the tour, the two tireless young men were anything but prepared for what was awaiting them in the city that had given birth to the modern woodcut movement. Hardly any woodcut groups were still around, and they had to turn to individual artists for assistance. Among those eager to lend a hand were Zheng Yefu, Wen Tao, Wozha (1905–1974), and Cao Bai, although none had any meaningful resources at his disposal. For his role in the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society, Cao Bai had been arrested in October 1933 and imprisoned until early 1935. Severely affected by this experience, he became a middle-school teacher after his release and largely refrained from touching woodblocks. Over the summer of 1935, however, he made two prints featuring Lu Xun and characters from his short stories, both of which he now offered to Jin Zhaoye and Tang Ke as they scrambled to find an affordable exhibition space.<sup>21</sup> The two organizers were neither accustomed to nor able to cope with the steep fees that were constantly demanded of them. Apart from the prevalent commercialism they encountered in Shanghai, they also quickly sensed a political control that was much more pervasive than in other parts of the country. In desperation, they decided to seek support from prominent cultural and intellectual figures, and one of the first names on their list was Lu Xun.<sup>22</sup>

When the letter from Tang Ke and Jin Zhaoye came on September 25, Lu Xun was caught in the middle of an exhausting period of overdrive. Since February, he had been engaged in translating the first volume of *Dead Souls* by the Russian novelist Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852). Lu Xun had undertaken the project not only to fulfill his wish of making this masterpiece available in Chinese, but also to earn some needed commissions.<sup>23</sup> In March, Lu Xun had complained to Chen Yanqiao that the translation job, in the wake of a recent illness and together with a host of other pressing matters, afforded him little pleasure and much less time to keep up with the latest woodcuts. He reported feeling like a miserable laborer and wondered how long he would last.<sup>24</sup> From late September to early October, the final push for finishing the project became so intense that he gave up his long-standing practice of answering correspondence immediately upon receipt.<sup>25</sup>



A second letter from Tang Ke arrived on October 2. Flustered by the intractable situation, Tang Ke was rather blunt in expressing "tremendous disappointment" at not having heard from Lu Xun, supposedly "a warm-hearted mentor to young people." He urged Lu Xun to support their endeavor and promised this would be their final call. Such a rash ultimatum did not please Lu Xun and drew from him a cold reply. In response to Tang Ke's two specific requests, Lu Xun satisfied one with a twenty-yuan donation but wrote that he could not make available any of his collection of foreign prints because it was stored elsewhere and was not retrievable on short notice.<sup>26</sup>

Lu Xun's letter must have struck Tang Ke and Jin Zhaoye as a serious blow. In their despondence, they came across a newspaper article that bore a heartening title: "Welcome the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* to Shanghai." Its author was Ye Lingfeng. Overjoyed by the unexpected friendly gesture, Tang Ke and Jin Zhaoye contacted Ye Lingfeng, who advised that an official approval from the Municipal Bureau of Education would facilitate the process and offered to make the initial inquiry for them.<sup>27</sup>

The unpleasant exchange of letters between Lu Xun and Tang Ke in October 1935 remains a glaring exception in some 120 extant letters that Lu Xun wrote between 1930 and 1936 to young people involved in modern woodcuts. Known for his dry humor and biting satire in published essays, especially over the last decade of his life, Lu Xun nonetheless rarely resorted to a caustic tone in private correspondence. The pronounced irritation in his reply, besides being triggered by the young man's inappropriate tone, may also have stemmed from a nagging discomfort that Lu Xun had developed with regard to Tang Ke and his group—not so much with their valiant efforts at promoting woodcuts as with a certain fluffiness in their artistic and intellectual pursuits.<sup>28</sup> While amazed by the number of newspaper articles and supplements that had been occasioned by the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* in Beiping, which Tang Ke had proudly collected and sent to him in January, Lu Xun had found little that was creative or to the point in the writings. Turned off by the formulaic statements, he had hesitated before accepting the invitation to write a preface to the commemorative volume.<sup>29</sup> He soon likened the group's pontifications on woodcuts to the stiff, formulaic eight-legged essays spawned by the imperial civil service examination system of the old days.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, he was not exactly encouraging about Jin Zhaoye's wish to publish individual woodcut collections. He had not been impressed by Jin's own attempts at woodcuts; nor was he "optimistic" about such premature self-promotion.<sup>31</sup>

Yet one other probable cause for Lu Xun's discomfort was an aggressive self-righteousness that he had begun to detect in the northern group. In his response to Lu Xun's recommendation that Li Hua and Luo Qingzhen were the two best woodcut artists, for instance, Jin Zhaoye had apparently charged them with plagiarism. Lu Xun stood by his assessment, commenting that, as a widespread practice, copying from masterpieces might be attributed to the rush to publish individual collections as much as to the lack of genuine content of one's own.<sup>32</sup> Before long, as the Modern Prints Society attracted more attention, Lu Xun would readily come to its defense when Li Hua felt the pressure of criticism from the north.



51 Cao Bai, *Portrait of Lu Xun*, 1935, woodcut.

On October 10, 1935, after government censors had removed about twenty prints from its lineup, the first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* finally opened at the China Knowledge and Science Society in Shanghai (plate 6). (One of the censored prints was a portrait of Lu Xun engraved by Cao Bai [fig. 51].) The eleven-day woodcut exhibition did not have as much impact as it had in other cities, in part because it opened on what was National Day in the Republican calendar, the first day of the Sixth National Sports Meet, also being held in Shanghai. Kicked off with great fanfare, the meet would dominate the media and public attention for the next ten days. Bus companies offered free rides to and from the stadium, and radio and newspaper coverage of the sports events was relentless. In writing to Lu Xun after the exhibition, Wen Tao would also blame financial constraint and an inconvenient location for the failure of the exhibition to reach a broad audience.<sup>33</sup>

Nonetheless, on October 17, the young essayist and literary critic Tang Tao (1913–1992) published a review in *Shun Pao*, in which he cheered the woodcut as constituting a genuine vanguard in public art. The exhibition, he believed, would help deflate any claims to supremacy by purportedly disinterested art. Tang Tao then singled out more than a dozen artists for praise, among them Li Hua, Zheng Yefu, Luo Qingzhen, Zhang Wang, Chen Puzhi, and Xu Lunyin (who had recently died of poor health) (fig. 52), and commented that most





52 Xu Lunyin, *Snow*, 1934, woodcut.

impressive was the woodcut artists' ability to depict and capture their subjects' facial expressions.<sup>34</sup> (Before the exhibition, *Shun Pao* had reproduced Chen Yanqiao's *Pull* in a pictorial insert introducing contemporary artists. On the opening day, two separate stories about the exhibition also appeared in the paper.<sup>35</sup>) On October 20, a report in *Shun Pao* reminded its readers that it was the last day of the exhibition. The reporter commended the woodcut artists for "breaking out of the ivory tower and crying out for the masses" and urged readers to catch the exhibition before it moved on to Nanjing and Guangzhou.<sup>36</sup>

The considerable publicity given to the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* by *Shun Pao* reflected the mainstream media's growing recognition of the impact of the new artistic medium. It also attested to the success of the exhibition in reaching the urban population and in influencing public opinion. The *Shun Pao* reporter's endorsement of the woodcut as a populist and vocal art form, for instance, illustrated to what extent the message of the medium had entered public discourse in general and discussions of art in particular. The first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* thus marked the birth of a public visual art in modern China and asserted the existence of an active woodcut community with national connections. The official *Shanghai Yearbook* of 1935, which listed the woodcut exhibition as one of

seven remarkable art events of the year, acknowledged both a nationwide "woodcut field" and viewer enthusiasm in its assessment of the event.<sup>37</sup>

Yet neither Nanjing nor Guangzhou would see the exhibition, for after their sojourn in Shanghai, Jin Zhaoye and Tang Ke were financially strapped and had to return to Beijing. In the meantime, residents in Nanjing were prompted continually by the government newspaper *Central Daily* to visit another art exhibition. From October 10 to 16, the Art Association of China held its third exhibition at the Overseas Chinese Guesthouse, the only functional exhibition space in the nation's capital. The government-sponsored association, headed by the artist-playwright Zhang Daofan (1897–1968), had been formed in November 1933 and boasted almost all the prominent artists, art educators, and critics in the country (including Xu Beihong, Gao Jianfu, and Feng Zikai) among its members. Conspicuously absent from the association, however, were heavyweights such as Lin Fengmian and Liu Haisu, who belonged to separate art societies of their own.

On October 13, 1935, Xu Beihong published a review of the Art Association of China's exhibition in *Art Supplement*, a Sunday magazine he had just started for the *Central Daily*. In it, Xu observed that the most important work in the exhibition was a large oil painting by Wu Zuoren (1908–1997), who had recently returned from France. Titled *Boat Trackers* (plate 7), Wu Zuoren's close study was, in Xu's judgment, comparable in spirit to, and compositionally more suggestive than, the famous *Volga Boatmen* (1872) by the Russian realist master Ilya Repin (1844–1930). Xu also spoke highly of a factory scene skillfully executed in oil by Sun Duoci (1913–1975), a young student of his at the Central University, and lamented that with all the talk about representing workers and common folks, few artists were willing to give the new subject matter a try.<sup>38</sup> (Wu Zuoren's *Boat Trackers*, celebrated as a "spectacular masterpiece" in the introductory caption, was reproduced as an accompaniment to Xu's article, along with a portrait in oil by Sun Duoci.) Xu obviously was not aware of the contemporary woodcut artists or the woodcut exhibition that was then going on in Shanghai.

The Art Association of China's exhibition was not exactly dominated by the "art savant" or rigorous realism that Xu Beihong favored. Indeed, he grudgingly acknowledged some Paris sketches by a young recently returned art student as having "out-Matisse" Matisse. The exhibition also included Chinese painting and calligraphy by notables such as Chen Shuren, Gao Jianfu, Wang Yachen, and Wang Jingfang. Nonetheless, the balanced and academic approach of this show was thrown into sharp relief by two more art exhibitions that also opened in the month of October—moreover, at the same venue in Shanghai that housed the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*.

In a remarkable coincidence, an exhibition organized by the Chinese Society of Independent Artists opened simultaneously with the woodcut exhibition, although it would close on October 15 and attract far less public attention. Originating among art students studying in Japan in the early 1930s, the Chinese Society of Independent Artists modeled itself after a similarly named French group and vowed to update Chinese art by keeping it



in tandem with the fast-changing European modernist trends. The group was also inspired by the Independent Art Association, which had brought together about a dozen Japanese modernists in 1930 in a concerted effort to create an art for the new age.<sup>39</sup> Declaring their independence from established styles and organizations, the Chinese artists, like their Japanese predecessors, embraced fauvism and surrealism as the latest expression of a new spirit in the visual arts.

In early 1935, Zhao Shou (1912–), Liang Xihong (1912–1982), and other members of the Chinese Society of Independent Artists returned from Japan to Guangzhou, bringing with them the latest and also the last significant wave of Western art to enter China from Japan. They started promoting their vision of a new contemporary art, self-consciously assuming the edifying role of “a social and cultural vanguard with regard to the public.”<sup>40</sup> They created an organ called *Independent Art*, issued an impassioned manifesto, published introductory articles in many journals, and mounted an exhibition at the municipal Hall of Popular Education in March. Other than the dozen or so core members of the society, this first exhibition also displayed works by some Japanese contributors as well as by modernist artists already active in Guangzhou, such as Guan Liang, Wu Wan, and Ding Yanyong.<sup>41</sup> In conjunction with its second exhibition, in Shanghai, the society published a volume titled *Modern Masterpieces*, which included reproductions of some forty European modernist oil paintings and noted nineteen modern “isms,” ranging from purism, suprematism, and surrealism, to neofauvism and neorealism.

The Shanghai exhibition by the Chinese Society of Independent Artists was unabashed about its modernist aesthetics. Moreover, it was followed by an exhibition by the Storm Society in the same facility. There were many spiritual as well as stylistic resonances between the Guangzhou-based Independents and the Storm Society, which had burst onto the Shanghai art scene in 1932: both groups rejected mimesis and upheld formal innovation as the expressive essence of modern painting. There were also direct personal interactions between the two groups. Zhao Shou, a leading member of the Chinese Society of Independent Artists, had been a student of Ni Yide and had met other members of the Storm Society before he left for Japan. Liang Xihong had briefly belonged to the Shanghai group and had taken part in its first exhibitions. It was therefore not surprising that the two modernist groups would organize exhibitions one after another at the same site. What was surprising to them, however, was how nonchalant the public and the art world seemed to be about their work.

On October 19, the Storm Society announced the opening of its fourth exhibition in *Shun Pao*. (The Chinese Society of Independent Artists had been unable to afford such publicity, although the October issue of *Art Breeze* covered its exhibition with reviews and illustrations.) No other mention was made in the newspaper of either the Storm Society or the Society of Independent Artists exhibitions, as it gave continual coverage to the concurrent woodcut exhibition. A few weeks later, in the November issue of *The Young Companion*, all three art events were represented, with fifteen works selected from the woodcut exhibition taking

up two full pages, and two more pages dedicated to “Two Exhibitions of Foreign Painting.” The fourteen monochrome reproductions in the latter spread included Zhao Shou’s best-known piece, *Jumping*; the distinctly surrealist *Desire* by Bai Sha; fauvist-style portraits by Yang Taiyang and Zhou Duo; and a highly stylized, Légeresque machine-dominated landscape simply titled *Design*, by Pang Xunqin.

In the wake of its poorly attended fourth exhibition, the Storm Society lost steam and soon dissolved. The great storm had turned into a barely noticeable ripple. The Chinese Society of Independent Artists hardly gained momentum from its Shanghai adventure either. It would remain active until 1937 but would confine itself largely to Guangzhou, never returning to Shanghai. Despite their stirring rhetoric and commitment to a self-sufficient and innovative art world, these two avowedly modernist groups found public indifference an awkward situation to deal with, for fundamental to their vision of a purely expressive visual art was still social recognition or relevance. Just as the Storm Society had pledged to express the spirit of a new age through new visions, so the Society of Independent Artists had announced its wish to “issue a naked cry for artistic freedom in front of the public.” They therefore could not but feel underappreciated or misunderstood by the elusive public to which they displayed their creative work in all sincerity. In clear contrast to the contemporary woodcut movement, the artists of the modernist movement were never seriously interested in identifying either the new age they celebrated or the public to which they appealed. They were eager to update or modernize Chinese art, but they had little patience for cultivating or engaging a domestic audience, even though they continued to refer to history and society as fueling their provocations against the established artistic styles and institutions they deemed as suffocating.<sup>42</sup>

The challenges that the woodcut movement posed to traditional aesthetic sensibilities, the accepted way of seeing, and the rarefied status of art were far more radical than those envisioned by the modernist artists. Yet what made the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* a greater success as a public art event, in Shanghai and elsewhere, was the firm association that promoters as well as practitioners of the woodcut had cemented between the artistic medium and a populist consciousness and discourse. The public or masses may have been variously imagined, but, as underscored by the organizers of the exhibition, the purpose of the woodcut as a new art form would be achieved only when society could appreciate its impact. This populist orientation determined that representational realism became a central feature or strategy of the woodcut movement.

Thus, among the fifteen woodblock prints from the exhibition that were reproduced in *The Young Companion*, thirteen portrayed human subjects as social beings—laborers, peasants, beggars, the poor, the injured, and the exploited. Another set of nine works from the exhibition was published in the October issue of *Modern Sketch*, an influential cartoon monthly that had been edited by Lu Shaofei since January 1934. There, too, the “woodcut cartoons of contemporary China” constituted a series of snapshots from the life of the working

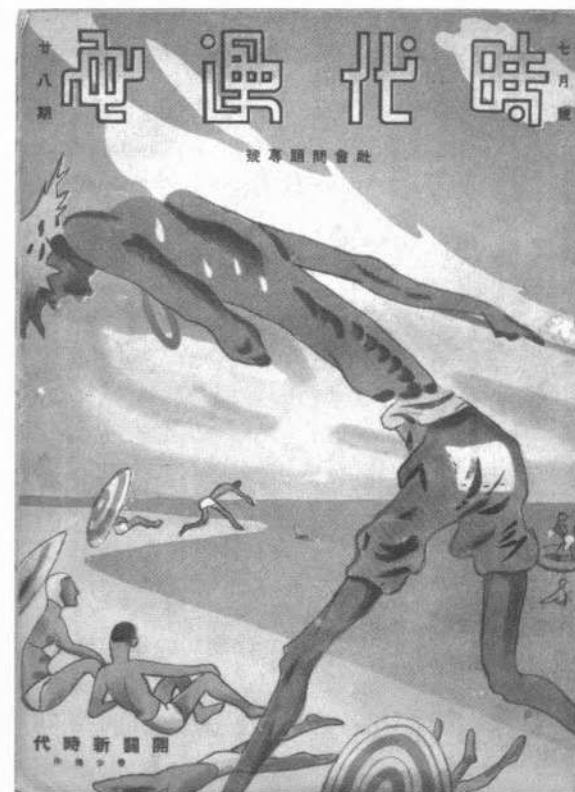




53 Luo Qingzhen, *Against the Current*, 1935, woodcut.



54 Chen Baozhen, *Coolies*, ca. 1935, woodcut.



55 Cover of *Modern Sketch*, July 1936, with *Creating a New Epoch* by Lu Shaofei.

and struggling masses. Both journals recognized the boat tracker as a prevalent theme in contemporary woodcuts: while *The Young Companion* selected Luo Qingzhen's fine print *Against the Current*, *Modern Sketch* reproduced a much more expressive woodcut by Chen Baozhen (figs. 53 and 54). *Against the Current* outlines six boatmen, each with his head bent low under a straw hat, straining to pull a freight boat outside the frame. Their strenuous effort is highlighted by the meticulously executed riverbank, flowing water, and rolling hills, which stand in sharp focus and seem impervious to the toiling figures, whose faces are almost completely in shadow and are therefore indistinguishable. In contrast to Luo Qingzhen's patient wood engraving, the woodcut by Chen Baozhen uses high contrast to zoom in on two trackers, the massive white background evoking an unrelenting sunlight burning the eyes of both the two men inside the frame and the viewer in front of it. (Published under the title *Coolies*, Chen Baozhen's print was also known as *Movers of the Epoch*.) The subject matter and the implied viewer of both prints had much in common with those in Wu Zuoren's oil painting of the same subject, although the three individuals on the canvas are distinctly European. These three works indicate the existence of a popular subgenre combining figure drawing, landscape, and humanistic compassion, but they would circulate in two separate circles because of their marked difference in medium, size, status, reference, cultural connotation, and self-positioning (fig. 55).



## GUANGZHOU AS EPICENTER

The fifteen prints reproduced in *The Young Companion* included at least three works by members of the Modern Prints Society from Guangzhou. By the time these reproductions appeared in November 1935, however, Li Hua and his fellow printmakers probably would have had a hard time recognizing their own work from almost a year before, for conceptually as well stylistically they had moved a long way from the fall of 1934, when they had made those initial prints and submitted them to the Beiping-Tianjin Woodcut Research Society. As the most productive woodcut group in the country, the Modern Prints Society developed systematic publication and exhibition programs and began to function as a pillar of the spreading woodcut movement. Apart from some of the most enduring woodblock prints of the prewar period, the Guangzhou group also left behind a rich body of theoretical writings.

When Li Hua first contacted Lu Xun in December 1934, the Modern Prints Society was only several months old and far from what it was to become. The group initially had about thirty members, almost all of whom were second-year students of Western painting at the Guangzhou Municipal School of Fine Arts. Li Hua was a drawing instructor, with the most experience in printmaking of all the society's members. Another senior member was Tang Yingwei, who had studied Chinese painting and experimented with printmaking on his own.<sup>43</sup> When it was first formed, the Modern Prints Society regarded itself primarily as a study group. Unlike the Beiping-Tianjin Woodcut Research Society to the north, this campus-based group was initially less interested in networking for a public event than in making and displaying its own prints. As recounted by Hu Qizao (1915–1965), the group's charter stipulated that each member submit at least three prints every week for peer review. This weekly exercise was to lead to an on-campus monthly show, on the basis of which a semi-annual exhibition would be held.<sup>44</sup> The first monthly exhibition, which included 125 prints, took place in mid-September 1934. A second monthly show followed on schedule but moved to an off-campus site—the provincial Hall of Popular Education. Then, for a week in mid-December, the Modern Prints Society held its first semiannual exhibition at the YMCA, where it presented well over three hundred pieces (figs. 56 and 57).<sup>45</sup>

As their exhibitions expanded in scale and reach, society members began to address a larger audience. They offered a systematic apology for the art of printmaking in the first issue of *Modern Prints*, published in December 1934. Drawing on the widely accepted socioeconomic justification of the print revival movement in modern Europe, they asserted that prints would make art more affordable in China, a society on the verge of bankruptcy. They also stated their belief that the medium's visual appeal and rich techniques allowed the woodcut best to express emotions and represent social reality at the same time. In addition, since they were easily reproduced, woodcuts could satisfy public demand much better than other artistic mediums.<sup>46</sup>

The more than forty prints collected in the first issue of *Modern Prints* represented a broad array of topics and styles, suggesting an inclusive gathering of exercises rather than a concerted design. The first print, *Nude and Still Life of the Interior*, by Li Hua, obviously



56 Liang Yunxiang, *Blue Bird*, 1935, woodcut.



57 Pan Ye, *Jobless Workers*, 1935, woodcut.



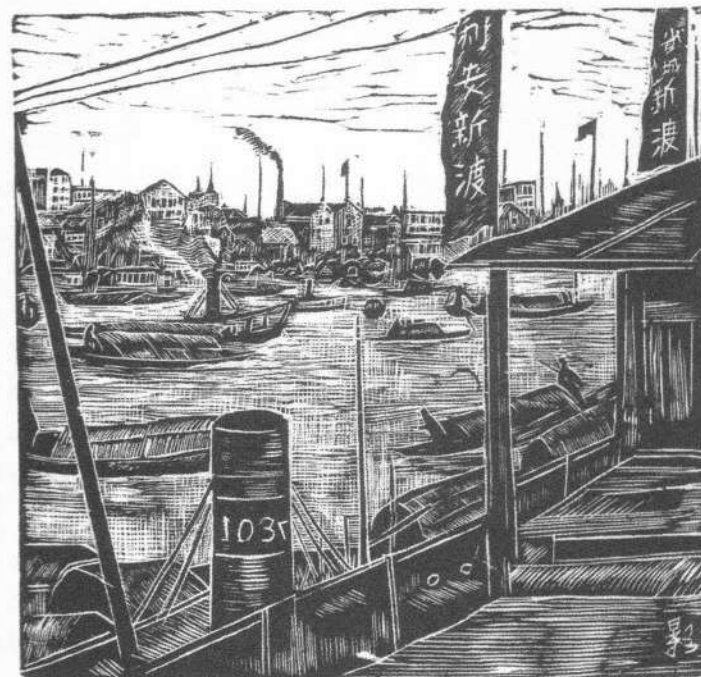


58 Lai Shaoqi, *On the Beach*, 1934, woodcut.

aimed at the effect of a modernist studio painting. His second print, *Landscape of the Northern Country*, was a much more deliberate study of the austere sensibility and graphic effect of the woodcut. Li Hua's six other contributions to this first issue included *Rioting Soldiers*, depicting in bold relief a terrified peasant couple, with the woman holding her child, fleeing a chaotic scene of pillage and killing. The six prints made by Tang Yingwei were also rather diverse in mood and subject matter, although the artist's interest in cutting fine parallel white lines against a black background gave his images a distinctive texture. His highly competent *Gatherers of Firewood* may be viewed as a patient exercise in creating a mixture of shapes, textures, and movements through varying white lines and dots.

Also in this first issue were three prints by Lai Shaoqi (1915–2000), whose *On the Beach* spoke the abstract idiom of modern art with a noticeable expressionist accent (fig. 58). The fluid and wavering contours of the nude and the encircling movement of geometric shapes in this woodcut had nothing in common with the artist's *Selling the Daughter*, however. In this latter, more rigid work, Lai evidently decided that graphic details would help him capture a dark reality (hence the meticulously executed brick walls in the back), but fuzzy drawing at the center hardly made the four characters engaged in the shady transaction emerge as more than conceptual entities.

These two prints by Lai Shaoqi underline a common challenge faced by members of the Modern Prints Society. Given their academic training and artistic exposure, which oriented them primarily to modern Western art, the task of making a detailed, credible, and sensi-



59 Zhang Ying, *Wharf*, 1934, woodcut.

tive rendition of Chinese subjects on a woodblock was far from easy. To depict an everyday situation, as was demanded by their collective belief in the representational capacity of the woodcut, this group of art students had to acquire a new visual vocabulary and perspective. This task was all the more daunting because the stark human lives and conditions they wished to depict had hardly entered the existing representational order or conventions. *Mine Tunnel* by Mei Changye, for example, shows how the wish to expose a murky subterranean reality was yet to be supported by an illuminating descriptive power, and the old miner in a study by Liu Xingxian looks more Caucasian than Asian. Both artists seem to have been more comfortable in their more playful exercises. (As a student of Western painting, Mei Changye's watercolor and oil exercises would be featured in a campus monthly titled *Art*, which would begin publication later in October 1935.)

However, Lai Shaoqi was well aware of the need to create a distinctly Chinese style. In his preface to a collection of woodcuts made by Zhang Ying (1915–1959), he drew a specific connection between stylistic choices and artistic orientations. Of the two trends among practicing printmakers, he observed, one was to employ a rounded gouge to convey taste and connoisseurship; the other relied heavily on a V-shaped graver to achieve more precise lines and to indicate a sharper social consciousness. The first trend he identified as Japanese in origin; the second, Russian. In Lai Shaoqi's view, by making his characters as well as his rural scenery recognizably Chinese, Zhang Ying pointed to the creation of an identifiably native style in his woodcuts (fig. 59).<sup>47</sup>

Lai Shaoqi not only took the lead in raising the question of a national style, but he was also the first among the Guangzhou group to pay tribute to Lu Xun in his prints. His own collection *Poems and Woodcuts*, which he finished around the same time as Zhang Ying's volume, includes a print that presents a collage of scenes from Lu Xun's novella *The True Story of Ah Q*, as visualized by Lai. The images are spread across an open book, next to a glowing candle. Standing atop the book is an ink bottle, on the label of which is a vaguely distinguishable image of Lu Xun. This ingeniously conceived print is titled *Mr. Lu Xun* in this handmade volume, but would often be presented and remembered as *Still Life* in other publications. In December 1934, Lu Xun received both Lai Shaoqi's and Zhang Ying's volumes.<sup>48</sup> In a letter to Lai Shaoqi, Lu Xun noted that he was much impressed with what he called an "impressionistic" style in Lai's work.<sup>49</sup> In his separate reply to Zhang Ying, he observed that, as in the case of many young woodcut artists, Zhang Ying's figure drawings were weaker than his landscapes.<sup>50</sup>

Toward the end of December 1934, the first number of *Modern Prints* reached Lu Xun with a handwritten dedication by Li Hua on the cover. In the following year and a half, whenever the latest issue of *Modern Prints* became available, Li Hua and his colleagues would send a copy to their most revered reader. Altogether, Lu Xun received eighteen issues, which he would peruse appreciatively, comment on, and then add to his collection of modern Chinese woodcuts. As a result, one (and probably the only) complete set of *Modern Prints* survived and is preserved at the Lu Xun Museum in Shanghai (fig. 60).

In a letter to Li Hua acknowledging receipt of the first issue of *Modern Prints*, Lu Xun expressed his regret over the poor quality of the images, which he tied to the use of glossy paper and oily paint. Mindful of his own experience in making *Progress in Woodcuts*, he advised that creative woodcuts should be hand-printed for optimum visual effect; mechanical reproduction generated inferior copies. Responding to Li Hua's stated wish to organize an exhibition in Shanghai, Lu Xun confessed that there was little he could do to help, given the hostile political environment. The reason that woodcut groups could hardly last in Shanghai, he observed, had to do with the radical politics that young woodcut artists seemed eager to flaunt.<sup>51</sup>

Heeding Lu Xun's advice, the Modern Prints Society adopted manual printmaking and collated just fifty copies of the second issue of *Modern Prints*, a drastic reduction from the press run of five hundred for the inaugural issue. They would derive great joy from collectively making and pasting prints onto blank albums and come to appreciate better the formal properties of woodcuts.<sup>52</sup> Realizing that the small number of handmade copies could hardly justify the claim of woodcuts as a public art, they decided to turn the periodical into an open forum dedicated to research into the art of printmaking. Of the fifty copies of every issue, fifteen would be sold at the price of thirty cents (0.3 yuan) per copy and the rest sent to fellow artists across the country. The copies for sale were meant to help the group reach beyond their familiar circle of colleagues.<sup>53</sup>

They also made a point of exploring new subject matter. In March 1935, they put together two special issues (4 and 5) on popular New Year's celebrations and daily life in Guangzhou.

# 现代版画

集三第刻木印手

1935



60 Cover of *Modern Prints*, February 1935, with woodcut *Street Sweepers* by Li Hua.

Good-humored depictions of folk traditions, such as dragon dances and the lantern festival, incorporated a folksy pictorial idiom and ethnographic point of view. The vivid color prints in these two collections broached a theme and a genre rarely undertaken by other woodcut artists up to that time. The fifth issue offered a more sober, mostly monochromatic view of a dispirited urban existence. The featured prints depicted a dog market, a gambling crowd, the anti-opium campaign, prostitutes, and the hungry. The preface that Li Hua wrote for this special issue defended the woodcut as a folk art that was fundamentally sincere, forthright, and *naïve*. When the goal of an artist was neither embellishment nor self-deception, he argued, woodcuts were the ideal medium for representing the simple and elemental life of the common folk. The scenes of "naked triviality," wrote Li Hua, were meant to inform friends from afar as much as to prompt local readers to see and reflect on their own lives.<sup>54</sup> (One very gratified viewer was Lu Xun, who recommended that Li Hua send copies of the fourth issue to Japan and Russia.<sup>55</sup>)

The next two issues of *Modern Prints*, both of which appeared in April, were largely collections of exercises by some fifteen regular members of the Modern Prints Society. The range of subject matter, from melancholic visions to humanitarian concerns, was as varied and broad as the exploration of technical and stylistic possibilities. The four prints made by Li Hua were a case in point. The two color prints, titled *Disillusionment* and *The Daydreamer*, differed markedly from the black-and-white *The Wounded* and *Doing Laundry*, and together they suggested the twin tasks assumed by the artist: the imperative to convey his or her subjectivity on the one hand, and the responsibility to share observations on the other.

In his preface to the sixth issue of *Modern Prints*, Lai Shaoqi affirmed a collective belief that the artist was uniquely positioned to perceive as well as to illuminate. Quoting Guo

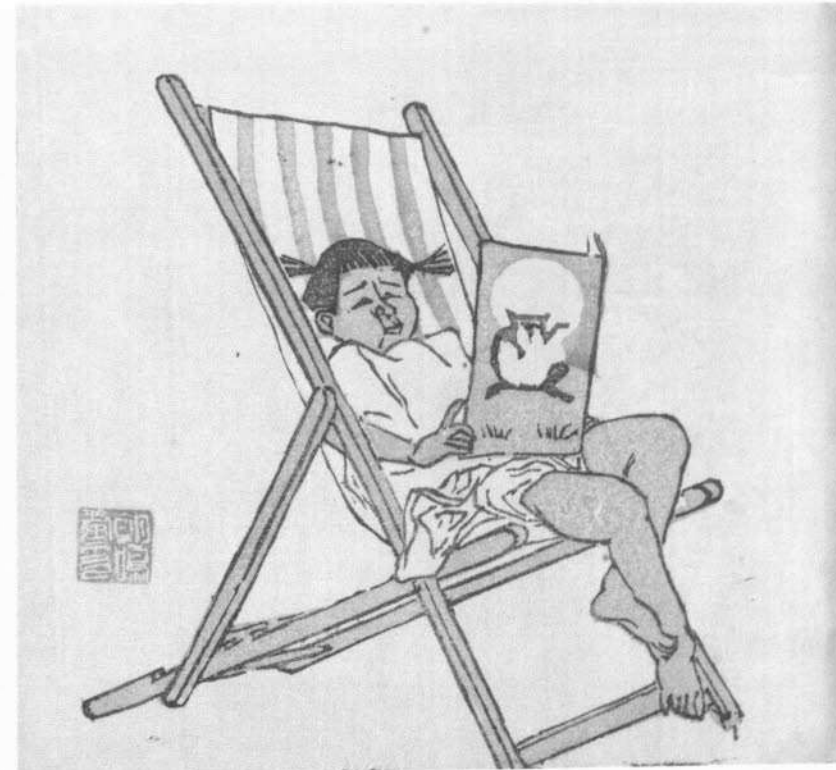


Moruo's endorsement of expressionism, he reiterated that the artist should not imitate or represent nature, but rather ought to "express nature." To a tormented and agonized public, he further stated, the art of woodcuts came as a relief because they served to strengthen public morale.<sup>56</sup>

The case that Tang Yingwei made in the seventh issue for a socially purposeful realist art indicated a greater degree of theoretical sophistication. From the basic Marxist assertion that art is a sociohistorical product, Tang concluded that realist art was an art of defamiliarization. "Insofar as art is an expression of the conscious existence of humanity, it must regard human life as its subject matter and represent the complex formations of human society." The social nature of artistic practices, in Tang's view, belied "all claims to the supremacy of art," which were often "symptomatic of the decline of modern art." In contrast to subjective modern art, he defined the woodcut as a realist art that refused to delude itself with "pleasurable seductions and gilded fantasies." Woodcut artists chose to look hard into the ordinary and ugly forms of social life and represent them accurately, he claimed; their work may have lacked aesthetic pleasure, but it would enable the public to recognize its own existence and "experience a shock more distinct and more poignant than from real life." To deliver such a revelatory shock, the artist had to be equipped with more than a wealth of real life experiences; he also had to convey a bright future through his close and credible depictions of reality. Vision and verisimilitude, therefore, were at the heart of the task for woodcut artists committed to a realist art.<sup>57</sup>

In late May 1935, soon after the ninth issue of *Modern Prints* came out, Li Hua and his comrades found themselves faced with a different kind of criticism. Newspaper articles published in Beiping and Tianjin described the woodcuts published in *Modern Prints* as riddled with bourgeois self-indulgence and in danger of succumbing to an ideological pitfall.<sup>58</sup> One particularly problematic instance seemed to be the latest issue, in which Li Hua, after speaking highly of the achievements and influence of the Japanese *ukiyo-e* print, suggested that the creative print movement in modern Japan had benefited from this native tradition. He singled out the White and Black Society as a representative group and noted that he was grateful to have received an original print from its leading member, Ryōji Chomei (fig. 61).<sup>59</sup> Along with a reproduction of this print, placed in a prominent position, the issue also included ten bookplates by society members, the goal being to promote the practical use of woodcuts.

Taken aback by such stern accusations, Li Hua turned to Lu Xun for guidance. In his longest letter yet to Li Hua, Lu Xun was forthright in voicing his support and encouragement, despite his own reservations about the eremitic tendencies of contemporary Japanese prints.<sup>60</sup> He made clear his disagreement with the tenor of the criticism, observing that it would be much worse, even hypocritical, for an artist to feign radicalism. Reminded of the acrimonious debate about revolutionary literature half a decade before, in which he was similarly denounced for his bourgeois predilections, Lu Xun quickly put things in perspective: "It is true that woodcuts are an instrument for a certain purpose, but one should never forget that they are also art." Such an instrument is effective only as long as it is artful, he ar-



61 Ryōji Chomei, *Girl in Yellow Dress*, ca. 1935, woodcut.

gued, just as an axe may be useful only when it is sharp. Furthermore, he quipped, only someone who knows nothing about carpentry would insist on regarding a dull axe as an acceptable tool.<sup>61</sup>

When Lu Xun's letter arrived, members of the Modern Prints Society had just opened their second semiannual exhibition on June 15. The eleven-day exhibition, held simultaneously in two locations, was a much more spectacular affair than their first semiannual exhibition had been and may have modeled itself after the first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*. Aside from the more than 280 prints by society members, the exhibition displayed modern Chinese woodcuts by nonmembers, contemporary and traditional Japanese woodcuts, reproductions of Western prints, as well as traditional Chinese woodcuts and folk-style prints.<sup>62</sup> This second semiannual exhibition was nonetheless the last of its kind mounted by the Modern Prints Society. In its wake, the group would shift its attention to more mobile and compact shows, often presented outside the city of Guangzhou.

The tenth issue of *Modern Prints*, also published on June 15, carried brief statements by five of the core members of the Modern Prints Society and presented the largest number of works since the first issue. It also published two small prints by the noted Japanese printmakers Maekawa Senpan (1888–1960) and Kawakami Sumio (1895–1972). (By continuing to present Japanese prints in all but one issue until February 1936, *Modern Prints* was unique



点点銀燈，  
照澈黑夜之幔，  
幔中啊！  
從黑色襯出  
桃粉紅色，  
愛人啊！  
願你吧！  
永遠有這黑夜  
的顏色。

62 Hu Qizao, *Pink Dreams*, 1935, woodcut.

in acknowledging an artistic affinity between the Chinese woodcut artists and the modern *sōsaku-hanga* movement in Japan.<sup>63</sup>) The statement made by Tang Yingwei, who had emerged as a major spokesperson for the Modern Prints Society, was clearly a rebuttal of criticisms leveled against the group. Regretting that their sincere efforts had been misunderstood, Tang argued that art had a life of its own and that artistic subjectivity should not be denied as a valid aspect of the creative process. Hu Qizao offered his own work as an example of art reflecting personal experiences (fig. 62), but insisted on its general relevance and educational function. Li Hua also contributed a short paragraph to underscore the vital connection between art and historical conditions. Emphasizing that art could not thrive independently of society, he urged artists to live up to their social and historical responsibilities.<sup>64</sup>

While continuing to make fifty copies of every new issue of its main journal, the Modern Prints Society was keen to bring its work to the public and developed outreach programs on several fronts. During October 1935, the society sponsored two relatively small public exhibitions, one featuring fifty prints by Tang Yingwei and the other presenting some sixty prints by Lai Shaoqi (plate 8), Chen Zhonggang (1916–?), and Pan Ye (fig. 63). The three-person show took place at the Public Gallery, a photography studio and art-supply store in downtown Guangzhou. (Flyers advertising the exhibition caught the attention of Xu Beihong, who was passing through Guangzhou. Lai Shaoqi and his friends were most delighted



63 Pan Ye, *Spring Field*, 1935, woodcut.

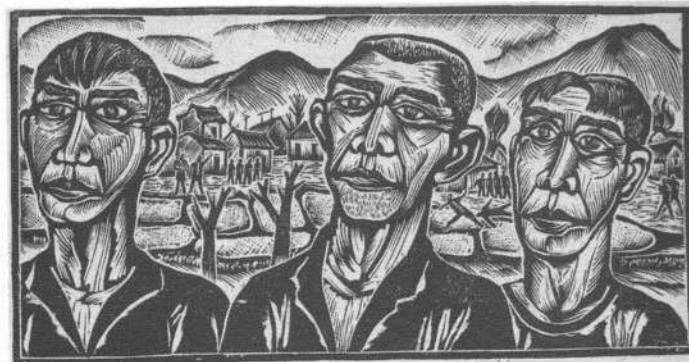
when the controversial master showed up at the gallery.) In the following weeks, the same gallery hosted two more exhibitions, featuring the works of Hu Qizao and Li Hua. Meanwhile, Tang Yingwei's solo show would travel as far as the town of Yuci in Shanxi province.

On January 1, 1936, the Modern Prints Society took an innovative step with its first rural woodcut exhibition at the Hall of Popular Education of Xinzao county outside Guangzhou. Arranged through personal contacts, the exhibition was tailored for a rural audience and attracted thousands of curious visitors. By the beginning of July, at least six more "rural exhibitions" had been organized by the society, all of them well attended and almost all hosted by the local Hall of Popular Education.

A third component of the Modern Prints Society's outreach program was its mass production of pictorial narratives. Five hundred copies of *Unemployment*, a woodcut narrative by Lai Shaoqi, were printed in June 1935. Five months later, the society released four hundred copies of *An Ordinary Story* by Hu Qizao. The making of this thirty-frame auto-



64 Tang Yingwei, *The Homeless*,  
ca. 1936, woodcut.



biographical narrative was encouraged by Li Hua, who had himself created a series of woodcuts titled *The Death of Chuntian* and would soon follow with a ninety-frame narrative about the first Shanghai war. Tang Yingwei, too, would contribute to this form of woodcut art: in February 1936, the *Southeastern Daily* of Hangzhou began serializing his seventy-frame *Fire Line*.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, the Modern Prints Society would take every opportunity to promote and publish woodcuts through print media. For its first rural exhibition in Xinzao, the society published the first issue of *Popular Pictorial* in association with the sponsoring Hall of Popular Education. The pictorial, which would last four issues, focused exclusively on woodblock prints. Beginning in the spring of 1936, when the Art and Literature Research Society started the journal *Literary Vanguard* in Guangzhou, core members of the Modern Prints Society regularly supplied prints for the journal's special section on woodcuts.

In March 1936, as the Modern Prints Society extended its reach and attracted more attention, Tang Yingwei and others began preparations for a journal that would be machine-printed and broadly circulated. By now, *Modern Prints* had included works by nonmembers in its pages. The first work by a nonmember, a landscape by Chen Yanqiao (now based in Guangdong), appeared in the journal's twelfth issue, published in October 1935, and this was followed by works from Duan Ganqing (1902–?), Luo Qingzhen, and Liqun, each of them from a different part of the country.

In the meantime, issues of *Modern Prints* recorded noticeable shifts in style as well as in thematic concerns. Beginning with the eleventh issue, in September 1935, for instance, attention was even more focused on representations of laborers, peasants, wounded soldiers, and victims of hunger and flood. The images also conveyed less emotional ambiguity, as the implied rhetoric was that they were made on behalf of the represented. In addition, there was a growing interest in employing the technique of line drawing, instead of tonal masses or modeling, to achieve a clearer, more dramatic, and less exotic visual effect in portraying Chinese subjects. Li Hua's work, such as *Supper for the Jobless*, was indicative of this trend, although prints by Tang Yingwei, Lai Shaoqi, and Chen Zhonggang all demonstrated a similar stylistic pursuit (fig. 64).

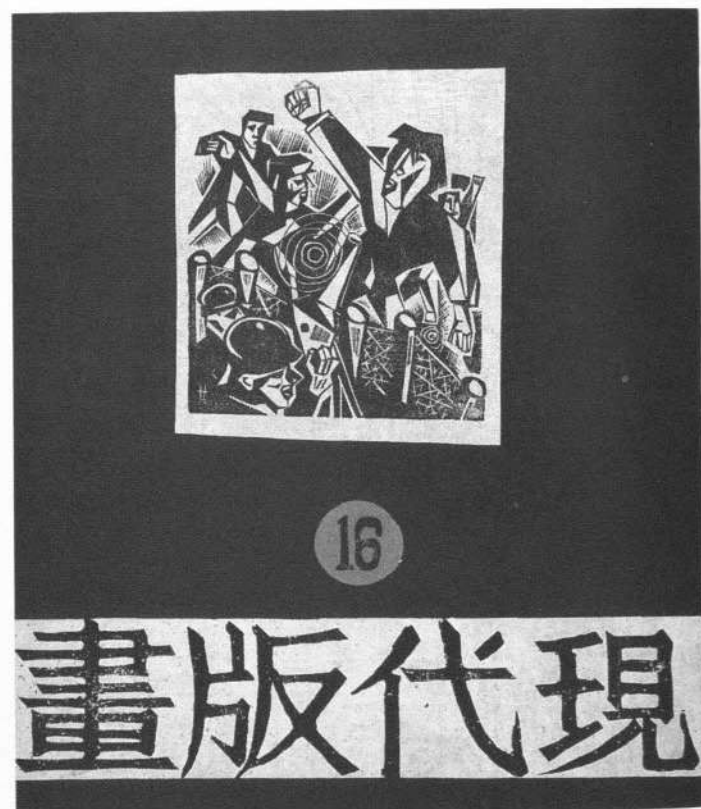


65 Chen Zhonggang, *Outcry*, 1935, woodcut.

An even more meaningful development in the group's artistic conception was marked by Chen Zhonggang's *Outcry*, first published in the twelfth issue of *Modern Prints* (fig. 65). Central to the print's dynamic composition is the emaciated man's anguished cry. The desire to capture and extend a desperate voice through the visual image had been pivotal to earlier woodblock prints, such as Hu Yichuan's *To the Front* (1932, fig. 30), as we have seen. Chen Zhonggang's image was particularly significant because, through a direct evocation of Lu Xun's first collection of short stories, *Outcry* (1923), it established a vital connection between the cultural and intellectual legacy of the May Fourth era and the current artistic movement. The spirit of Lu Xun's defiant and outspoken Madman was poignantly revived and given a new incarnation.

Chen Zhonggang's *Outcry* ushered in a series of exclamatory visual images in the final issues of *Modern Prints*. In December, Li Hua's best-recognized work, *Roar, China!*, appeared in the fourteenth issue. A special issue dedicated to the coming of 1936 followed, and it was

66 Cover of *Modern Prints*, February 1936, with woodcut *Explosion* by Lai Shaoqi.



loud and clear in its political statements. *People Who Cry Out* by Tang Yingwei underscored a formal tension between depicting human subjects and giving visual form to their exclamations, while Lai Shaoqi's *The Voice of the Nation* made reference to the pro-resistance student demonstration that had taken place on December 9 in Beiping and that had been brutally suppressed by a government wary of the Japanese military.

The fascination with the visual representation of the agitated human voice, or what may be called an aural turn, among core members of the Modern Prints Society in late 1935 was compelled by contemporary events. As the Japanese military continued to extend its presence beyond Manchuria and into northern China, an ambivalent and ineffectual Nanjing government was causing ever more public furor and frustration. Even within the governing Nationalist Party, dissent over Chiang Kai-shek's Japan policy had bolstered several long-existing factions, the more defiant among them being the Chen Jitang (1890–1954) and Li Zongren (1890–1969) alliance that was in control of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces to the south. (This in part accounted for the political atmosphere that had allowed the Modern Prints Society to exist and even flourish in Guangzhou for the time being [fig. 66].) At the same time, Chiang Kai-shek's successive military campaigns to stamp out the Communists eventually fell short of their objective when the Red Army, now under the leadership of Mao Zedong, completed the tortuous eight-thousand-mile Long March and reached the

barren northwestern loess in October 1935. While entrenching themselves in the remote and poverty-stricken region, the Communists continued to take a firm line against Japanese aggression and called for a popular united front of resistance. With the public acutely mindful of continual foreign encroachment, the idea of defending national sovereignty resonated much more profoundly than the Nanjing government's unstated policy of enlisting Japanese forces in an anti-Communist crusade.

On December 9, 1935, college and high school students in Beiping took to the streets to protest a Japanese-instigated program to institute "anti-Communist self-governance" in northern China. The demonstration was violently dispersed by the police, which only helped spread the student-led cause to other major cities in the south and touched off a new round of resistance mobilization across the nation. (Jin Zhaoye was arrested for his participation in the demonstration, and the woodblock prints from the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* were subsequently confiscated by the police and presumably destroyed.) On December 12, almost three hundred prominent editors, writers, and lawyers in Shanghai issued a statement on behalf of the cultural field to voice their support of the students in Beiping and to announce a broad campaign to save the nation. On the same day, several thousand students gathered on the main campus of Sun Yat-sen University outside Guangzhou and marched ten miles to the center of the city, chanting slogans and distributing leaflets along the way. Among the several faculty members taking part in the peaceful rally was the sociology professor He Sijing, formerly known as He Wei and a member of the Creation Society. In mid-November, he had published a poem intended to be the prelude to a grand *Heroic National Epic*. Addressing "the Chinese nation on the verge of extinction," the poet declared that a war of resistance was the only epic and "synthetic art" in modern China and that its completion must be a collective endeavor. For this magnificent project, he assigned specific tasks to peasants, workers, scientists, and soldiers and issued this rallying cry:

Let us rise and create,  
Together we will perform,  
Let us create a world historical performance,  
Let us perform the creation of world history. . . .  
With our most noble passion, artists and poets  
Come together to finish this sacred synthetic work  
And therein unfurl the future of art.<sup>66</sup>

The December 12 rally in Guangzhou set in motion, as a contemporary participant would proudly observe, the student movement in the birthplace of the National Revolution of 1926–27.<sup>67</sup> In rapid succession, passionate gatherings, walk-outs, and sit-ins took place on and off many university and high school campuses, leading to increasingly comprehensive demands and resolutions. By mid-January 1936, as the movement snowballed and began to draw in a significant number of workers and city dwellers, especially after an independent student federation was formed and the building for the provincial bureau of education was





67 Guo Mu, *December 24, 1935*, 1936, woodcut.

smashed on January 9, a government crackdown became inevitable. On January 13, militia disguised as pro-resistance civilians savagely attacked students gathering for another rally, thereby stirring up terrifying confusion, which the authorities seized on as a pretext to impose a city-wide military curfew. The bloody Liwan Incident of January 13 thus marked the end of the first phase of the pro-resistance student movement in Guangzhou.

Although their school did not play an active role during this tense period, the avalanche of events had an unmistakable effect on members of the Modern Prints Society. To express their solidarity with the student movement and support of the patriotic cause, they found it imperative to portray and document the spirited marches and rallies. An anti-imperialism special issue of *Modern Prints* appeared in April 1936, and at least two of the featured prints depicted pro-resistance student rallies.

The effort to extend a collective outcry in visual form soon received a theoretical exposition from Tang Yingwei. In introducing the new journal *Field of Woodcuts*, he summarized earlier statements made in *Modern Prints* and reiterated that the revival of Chinese woodcuts was part of the momentous transition to a new, anti-individualist art that had begun with the May Fourth Movement. At a time of worsening national crises, "it is only appro-

priate for us to use woodcuts as a tool to awaken the national consciousness of the people of the country" (fig. 67).<sup>68</sup>

Fully aware of the historical symbolism of the occasion, on May 4, 1936, Tang Yingwei held his largest solo exhibition to date at the YMCA in Guangzhou. He subsequently mailed the more than 120 works to Hangzhou, where his sister was attending the National Art Academy. For a campus that had not seen any significant woodcut exhibitions since the disbanding of the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society in October 1933, the show by Tang Yingwei would stimulate a revival of student interest in the art of printmaking.<sup>69</sup>

## FAREWELL, SHANGHAI

On April 15, 1936, five hundred copies of the first issue of *Field of Woodcuts* were released through a commercial publisher. The increased press run necessitated a different format and content than the handmade *Modern Prints*, which would soon stop publication. (The prints reproduced in the journal were still made from the original woodblocks, although these were now mounted on a mechanized press.<sup>70</sup>) The new journal also marked the coming-of-age of the Modern Prints Society as a leading national organization.<sup>71</sup> Since March, Tang Yingwei had begun gathering material for the new venture. One of the first things he did was to solicit a contribution from Lu Xun.

On receiving Tang's letter, accompanied by ten bookplates, in late March, Lu Xun wrote back right away. He had long wanted to see a nationally circulated woodcut publication and had specifically suggested such an idea to Li Hua in April 1935.<sup>72</sup> He saw the forthcoming *Field of Woodcuts* as an urgently needed publication that would serve as a national center and provide more references for artists. However, he decided that it would be best if he did not get involved, because, he said, paranoid censors would scrutinize anything that bore his name.<sup>73</sup> This was not the first time Lu Xun had refrained from attaching his name to a woodcut publication; he had even declined endorsing a collection by his favorite artist, Luo Qingzhen. Given the repressive political climate, he believed an endorsement from him would do more harm than good.<sup>74</sup>

In Shanghai, Lu Xun had seen signs of a tentative revival of the scattered woodcut community in spring 1936. Earlier in the year, Zheng Yefu, Jiang Feng, Wen Tao, Huang Xinbo, and Wang Shaoluo had formed the Iron Horse Prints Society (fig. 68). The name of the group came from Jiang Feng, who had until recently been in prison for his role in the Spring Field Painting Society. "Iron horse" was reportedly the name given to tractors by Soviet collective farmers. Lu Xun was greatly delighted to receive a copy of *Iron Horse Prints*, the first collection put out by the society, in February.<sup>75</sup> Later in the year, the Knife Force Woodcut Research Society was formed at the New China Art College, with Chen Kemo and Lu Di (1917–1982) as founding members.



68 Huang Xinbo, *Violent Winds and Fierce Waves*,  
ca. 1935, woodcut.

An even more encouraging event in Shanghai was a large exhibition of Soviet prints that took place in late February 1936. In writing to thank him for the copy of *Iron Horse Prints* on February 17, Lu Xun informed Zheng Yefu of the upcoming exhibition, which, sponsored by the Soviet government agency VOKS, the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association, the Art Association of China, and other organizations, was part of the cultural exchange program established after the Nanjing government formally restored diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union in 1932. The exhibition, titled *Soviet Graphics*, opened in January 1936 in Nanjing, where it was well received. Xu Beihong wrote an introduction to the event, hailing the Soviet prints as part of the vigorous new culture of a socialist country.<sup>76</sup> Before it traveled to Shanghai, Lu Xun was asked to help publicize the show by writing an introduction. On February 22, Cai Yuanpei opened the exhibition at the YMCA with a welcoming speech, and Lu Xun's enthusiastic endorsement appeared in *Shun Pao* two days later.<sup>77</sup>

Toward the end of his essay, Lu Xun described a deep vibration that the collection of more than two hundred Soviet prints seemed to transmit. To him, it was a vibration that echoed "the steady footsteps of a large, friendly army marching forward on a path of construction across a vast land of firm and dark soil." Lu Xun also characterized the works as sincere, beautiful, joyous, and energized, and noted that they were readily distinguishable from both

the exquisite style of French illustrations and the largely unbridled emotion found in German prints. Lu Xun was quite familiar with many of the works on display, but he went with Xu Guangping to enjoy the exhibition the day after the opening and ordered three original prints.

The happy occasion of welcoming the Soviet exhibition was overshadowed by a gloomy spring, however. A week after visiting the show, Lu Xun was seized by a violent asthma attack and was bedridden for days. More than two weeks later, still not fully recovered and mindful of the many things awaiting his attention, he commented wistfully on his advanced age and failing health in private correspondence.<sup>78</sup> (This crippling bout of illness only exacerbated a sense of weariness and dejection that had crept up on Lu Xun since at least the previous June, when he wrote to his Japanese translator and friend Masuda Wataru [1903–1977], wondering whether it was political oppression, the hardship of making a living, or old age and poor health that had made life much less enjoyable for him. He nostalgically recalled a "relaxed and carefree" life of four or five years before and lamented that it now all appeared like a dream.<sup>79</sup>) In the middle of May, Lu Xun fell ill again and suffered from a persistent low fever. On May 31, an American physician specializing in lung diseases, invited by a concerned Agnes Smedley, made a house call and concluded that Lu Xun had pulmonary tuberculosis in its final stage, a grim diagnosis later confirmed by an X-ray.

His deteriorating health aside, Lu Xun had been troubled for quite some time by his strained relationship with the leadership of the Zuolian, in particular its impolitic leader Zhou Yang and his associates. He was most uncomfortable with the cliquish ways in which the self-important leaders ran the league as an underground political party. A more serious source of friction between Lu Xun and Zhou Yang in early 1936 had to do with the eventual dissolution of the Zuolian. Following the CCP's call in late 1935 for a united front of resistance against Japanese aggression, the Zuolian leaders had decided to create a general coalition for the cause of national defense. Lu Xun was skeptical of such a reorientation, which to him would mean a wishful disregard of deep-rooted political differences. When he subsequently refused to be involved in any new organization, Lu Xun learned that he had been blamed for undermining the national united front.

One project that Lu Xun wanted to accomplish in late spring 1936 was the publication of prints selected from the Soviet exhibition. When Zhao Jiabi, the literary and fine arts editor of the Liangyou Press, had first proposed such a publication, Lu Xun had readily agreed to help make the selection. He promised to write a preface and requested that the publication indicate the prints' original dimensions for the benefit of the reader. According to Zhao Jiabi, this set a precedent in the history of fine arts publishing in modern China.<sup>80</sup> Yet the volume was not published until July 1936. For most of June, Lu Xun was so enfeebled by a recurrent fever that he could hardly sit up. On June 23, still on his sickbed and not wishing to halt the production process any longer, he decided to use the introduction that had appeared in *Shun Pao*, but added a few paragraphs. In the new conclusion, he apologized for not being able to write another preface. He also expressed confidence that the exhibition



had touched many artists in China and led them from indulging in groundless fantasy to a more anchored realism.<sup>81</sup>

News about a forthcoming volume of Soviet prints traveled quickly to the south. The "News" section of the inaugural issue of *Field of Woodcuts* in Guangzhou announced the availability of a collection called *Prints from the Soviet Union*. (This bootlegged edition contained poor images that had been clipped from newspapers and journals and a doctored version of Lu Xun's essay for a preface.<sup>82</sup>) For the next two months, the journal followed closely the progress of the soon-to-be-released Liangyou Press volume.

Relaying pertinent information to a national woodcut community was one of the main objectives of *Field of Woodcuts*. Tang Yingwei, the journal's editor, created regular columns to cover woodcut groups across the country. The "News" section of the April issue, for instance, reported the formation of the Rapid Torrent Woodcut Research Society, led by Duan Ganqing, in Nanchang (Jiangxi province) and the appearance of the Modern Woodcut Research Society in Kaifeng (He'nan). In the next two issues, the journal reported encouraging developments in the woodcut movement across the country, such as at the Central University in Nanjing, at the National Art Academy in Hangzhou, in Baoding (Hebei), and, most of all, in Guangzhou. It also briefly described the first woodcut exhibition organized by Duan Ganqing in Nanchang, mentioned the Iron Horse Prints Society in Shanghai, and publicized the undertakings of Chen Yanqiao during his sojourn in Hong Kong.

In May, another cultural event originating in Shanghai caught the attention of Tang Yingwei, Li Hua, and other woodcut artists. A call for public contributions to a volume called *One Day in China* appeared simultaneously in *Shun Pao* and in several literary and popular journals. Inspired by Maxim Gorky's idea of documenting "one day in the world" through reports and images, Mao Dun and the Literature Society had chosen May 21, 1936, as the date for this experiment to take place in China. Besides calling for essays, reports, and vignettes by writers, they invited artists throughout the country to "submit woodblock prints, sketches, cartoons, photographs of landscapes, or photographs of what happens in society" to the forthcoming volume.<sup>83</sup> By early June, more than three thousand pieces had poured in from almost every corner of the country, and the editorial staff was deeply in awe of the "innumerable 'unsung heroes' engaged in cultural work throughout poor villages and remote areas."<sup>84</sup> The visual component of the final product, published in September 1936, included photographs, a few cartoons, and seven woodblock prints. Chen Yanqiao depicted British soldiers overlooking Chinese coolies in Hong Kong, while Liqun focused on a peasant woman and her child collecting tree leaves for food (fig. 69). The latter print expressed an ambivalent mood insofar as it mixed hope with despair, celebration with a sobering recognition. Yet the most innovative print was a long scroll created by Tang Yingwei for the occasion. Titled *A Record of Major National Events*, this masterful work presents a continuous horizontal view of the nation in turmoil and under attack, with detailed references to multiple events, landscapes, symbols, passions, and voices, both individual and collective (plate 9). Reproduced prominently as the inside front and back covers of the monumental *One Day*



69 Liqun, *Collecting Leaves*, 1936, woodcut.

in China, *A Record of Major National Events* further confirmed the woodcut as a public art form best suited for representing political and social life in contemporary China.

In the meantime, the main story in all three issues of *Field of Woodcuts* from April to June 1936 was about the preparations in progress for the *Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition*, being organized by the Modern Prints Society. This traveling exhibition was to continue the project started by the first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* of 1935. Pending input by "woodcut comrades from around the country," the date for the new exhibition was set for mid-July 1936. Printed on the back cover of the April issue of *Field of Woodcuts* was a charter that the Modern Prints Society had drafted for the upcoming event.

Both comprehensive in scope and specific in details, the charter stipulated that the *National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition* should showcase works by contemporary woodcut artists and travel to different cities around the country. Any woodcut group or individual might initiate a new stop for the exhibition and would thereby take full responsibility to design and mount the exhibition in that venue. The bylaws also required that the sponsoring group or individual invite "local artists and celebrities publicly to review all the submissions" and stated that it was up to the sponsor to decide whether or not to submit the works to the authorities for official approval. Furthermore, the charter noted that since the exhibition would not be over until it had reached every destination on its itinerary, and because the dates for

each location could vary and new requests could arise, no definite dates existed for the traveling show; however, the expectation was that major cities should see a traveling woodcut exhibition at least once a year. "After each traveling woodcut exhibition is completely over, the group or individual in charge of the entire process should collect information on the exhibition from all the locations, compose a general report, and distribute it to the entire field of woodcuts as a historical document about the woodcut movement in contemporary China."<sup>85</sup>

Even though the charter stated that it would expire when the current exhibition project was completed, the document as a whole was clearly intended to define the *National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition* as a permanent and yet mobile institution. Drawing on the precedent of the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*, the document went one step further in formalizing a national exhibition network. As the first set of rules about organizing a woodcut exhibition to be published during this period, the draft charter was mostly concerned with the mechanics of sponsoring and transporting an exhibition. An unusual document for artistic practices and organizations at the time, the programmatic charter announced as much an institutional coming-of-age for the woodcut movement as it did an innovation in carrying on the movement.

The idea of a traveling exhibition would inspire other art groups. In June, when *Modern Sketch* resumed publication in Shanghai after a three-month suspension imposed by the authorities, the cartoon monthly announced, in a humorous tone, that it was going to sponsor a traveling exhibition of contemporary cartoons. Starting in Shanghai on August 1, the exhibition would first travel to Nanjing and then to wherever a contact was established. Virtually all the active cartoonists in Shanghai were on the thirty-one-member supervising board.<sup>86</sup> Unlike its counterpart in woodcuts, however, the cartoon exhibition did not come about.

While updates on the planned *National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition* continued to appear in *Field of Woodcuts*, the journal also sought to guide the woodcut movement through theoretical writings and woodcut works. Editor Tang Yingwei's essays were a case in point. In the May issue, he specifically addressed young woodcut artists and discussed what a correct understanding of their art ought to be. "We demand from contemporary woodcuts an art that is viable, self-conscious, stimulating, dynamic, popular, not at all the decorative kind with a shell but no soul." Moreover, he spoke highly of a modern realist art that captured the activities of an entire society through an artistic engagement with typicality.<sup>87</sup> With much more confidence, Tang would go on to tackle "The Question of Reality in Woodcuts" in the following issue. Even though the concepts he employed may have appeared unwieldy occasionally, his embrace of critical realism marked a point of arrival not only in his own intellectual journey, but also in the evolving theoretical discourse that nurtured the woodcut movement.

In addition to this theoretical exposition on critical realism, a sense of urgency with regard to the current national crisis permeated *Field of Woodcuts*. In April 1936, Li Hua wrote

an article titled "The Value of Woodcuts during the National Crisis." Condemning unintelligible art and an obsession with female nudes (which he dubbed as "the art of the buttocks"), he declared that the current national crisis called for an art that was "the most real, the most authentic, the most powerful, and the most straightforward."<sup>88</sup> His main points were subsequently endorsed by Liqun, a founder of the Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society in Hangzhou in 1933, whose essay "National Salvation and Woodcuts" appeared in the May issue, along with a woodcut depicting a battle scene, also by Liqun. In June, the young critic Jiang Xijin (1915–2003) observed that in anticipation of a large-scale and prolonged war of resistance, art had acquired the new mission of becoming a powerful "art for national defense," a mission that woodcuts were best suited to accomplish. To fulfill its destiny, the art for national defense had to be "practical, popular (accessible to the public), and collective," all of which, according to Jiang, were distinct qualities of the woodcut.<sup>89</sup>

Jiang Xijin's brief essay attested to the appeal as well as the persuasive force of "art for national defense" as both a concept and a program. The slogan derived from the concept of a "literature for national defense," initially proposed by Zuolian leader Zhou Yang in October 1934 to justify a comprehensive united front for the cause of resistance. About a year after Jiang Xijin's essay appeared, Lin Fengmian, still in charge of the National Art Academy in Hangzhou, continued to argue for the concept in "The Possibility of a National Defense Art," even though by then he had drifted far away from his early, thematically concerned large oil paintings (and his influence as a spiritual leader in the art field was considerably diminished).<sup>90</sup>

Lu Xun, displeased with the autocratic Zuolian leadership, had reservations about the new slogan, preferring the designation "public literature for a national revolutionary war."<sup>91</sup> The more cumbersome nomenclature, to him, was more precise and would better highlight the political nature and function of left-wing literature under the new historical exigencies. In June 1936, a fierce debate erupted between supporters of these two separate slogans, exposing factional alliances as much as theoretical disagreements within the left-wing literary establishment.<sup>92</sup> A core conceptual issue was who would constitute the main historical subject when national sovereignty was challenged from without. The agenda of a "public literature for a national revolutionary war" was not broad enough, explained Zhou Yang, because the public invoked there had always been used to connote "the masses of workers and peasants."<sup>93</sup> The raging controversy would cause extreme confusion, especially among younger readers who revered Lu Xun but also believed in the cause of the Zuolian.<sup>94</sup>

However, the heated debate in Shanghai did not seem to concern the collective associated with *Field of Woodcuts* too much. Nor was the woodcut community at large involved. The June number of *Field of Woodcuts* most likely arrived in Shanghai at a time when Lu Xun was too sick to read or keep his diary. When he felt better in July, he realized how close he had come to death and thought about leaving Shanghai for a quieter environment.<sup>95</sup> To his friend Masuda Wataru, who had come from Japan to pay a visit, the emaciated Lu Xun appeared stern and agitated, much like a "wounded wolf."<sup>96</sup>



Over the course of a swelteringly hot July, Lu Xun finished a project that he had started the previous September: a volume containing reproductions of twenty-one prints by Käthe Kollwitz. He had long admired the socially conscious German printmaker and wanted to introduce an artist who would cry out, sympathize with, and fight for the hurt and the down-trodden to more Chinese artists and readers.<sup>97</sup> With Agnes Smedley as co-editor and provider of some funds, Lu Xun had 103 copies made, seventy of which he intended to give away as presents.<sup>98</sup>

One young man whom Lu Xun wanted to have a copy of *Selected Prints by Käthe Kollwitz* was Cao Bai, whose portrait of Lu Xun had been removed from the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* when it opened in Shanghai. Unlike most other woodcut artists based in Shanghai, Cao Bai did not get in touch with Lu Xun until quite late. He stopped making prints after the Shanghai exhibition, but in March 1936, when he came across a print of his censored portrait of Lu Xun, he decided to send it to the writer, together with a self-introduction. Lu Xun wrote back almost immediately and vowed to preserve the print because it would be a reminder of the "present darkness and struggle."<sup>99</sup> Thus began a frequent exchange of letters and an extraordinary friendship between the ailing writer and the young man. As he learned more about Cao Bai's imprisonment for making a print of Anatoly Lunacharsky's portrait, Lu Xun was outraged. In April, he finished an impassioned essay, "Written at Midnight," and included in it excerpts from Cao Bai's own harrowing account of his prison experience. The essay was forwarded to Agnes Smedley, who subsequently arranged for its translation to appear in the new Shanghai-based English semimonthly *Voice of China* in June.<sup>100</sup>

At the beginning of August, Lu Xun wrote to offer Cao Bai a copy of the Käthe Kollwitz volume. He also mentioned that he would leave Shanghai in about a week, even though his destination was not yet known. A few days later, he wrote again to say that he was still not certain where he might go, but he was sorry that he would have to miss the upcoming *Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition*.<sup>101</sup> This was the first known reference to the event in Lu Xun's correspondence; evidently, he was aware that the exhibition was on its way to Shanghai.

The *National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition* had opened at the Municipal Sun Yat-sen Library of Guangzhou on July 5, even though about one hundred additional prints were still to arrive from Shanghai, Nanchang, Taiyuan, and other cities. Thirty-three artists displayed nearly six hundred woodcuts, over half of which were from seven pictorial narratives. Five of the artists were members of the Modern Prints Society (Li Hua, Tang Yingwei, Lai Shaoqi, Hu Qizao, and Liu Lun [1913-]) and were responsible for altogether close to four hundred prints; the other twenty-eight artists were based mostly in Beiping, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and other parts of Guangdong. Among the latter group were Wang Jingfang, Luo Qingzhen, Zhang Hui (1909-?), Huang Xinbo, Wen Tao, Jiang Feng, Wozha, and Zheng Yefu. A complete list of the artists and print titles was included in the fourth issue of *Field of Woodcuts*, which came out on the opening day as both a catalogue and a public announcement.



70 Cover of *Field of Woodcuts*, July 1936, with woodcut *Forward!* by Tang Yingwei.

A woodcut poster by Tang Yingwei, titled *Forward!*, appeared on the cover of the special issue and struck the keynote of the exhibition (fig. 70). Meant to urge collective action, the poster projected the self-portrait of a committed woodcut artist. As Tang Yingwei further explained in an introductory statement included in the issue, a central mission of the exhibition was to turn the woodcut into a cultural instrument for mobilization during the current national crisis.<sup>102</sup>

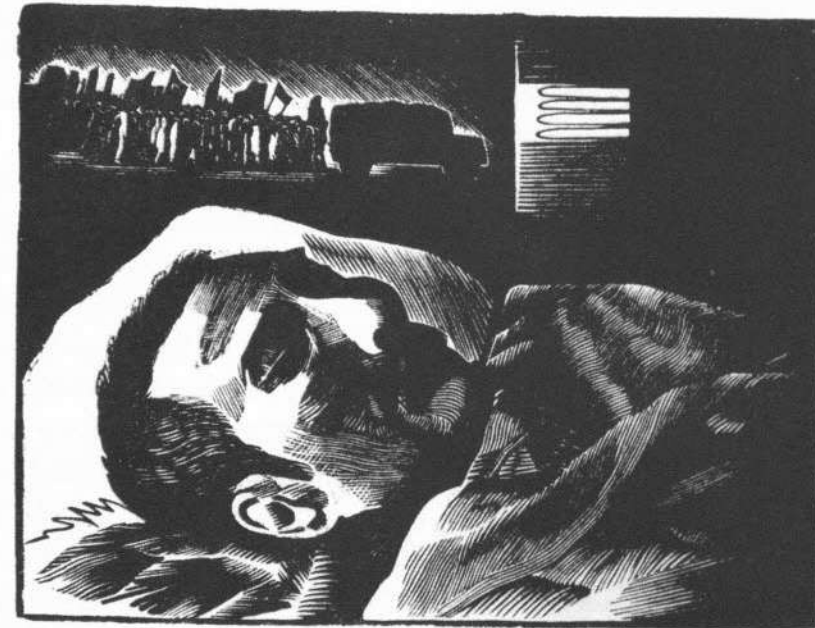
On the back cover of this issue of *Field of Woodcuts* was a map of China with crisscrossing lines indicating where the exhibition was scheduled to visit. (By the opening date, twenty-four cities and townships outside Guangdong had signed up to host the exhibition and logistical details were being worked out for several more major cities, such as Beiping, Xi'an, and Chengdu.<sup>103</sup>) The map graphically illustrated the goal of mobilizing and unifying a nation through a traveling art exhibition. The exhibition would not only function as concrete evidence of a national community, but also bring different locations into an enveloping national movement. As a serial and collaborative event, the exhibition would therefore exert a far greater impact than would a solo show or one particular artwork. The symbolic value of the event was further underscored as the map specified that the current exhibition was the

second occurrence of a national institution: organizers of the event clearly realized that for their purpose it was more vital to affirm the existence of a living tradition than to flaunt their own originality.

After the exhibition came to a close in Guangzhou on July 10, Tang Yingwei escorted it to Hangzhou, and from there it traveled to the nearby town of Shaoxing. Tang's departure from Guangzhou made it impractical to keep *Field of Woodcuts* going, especially now that active members of the Modern Prints Society were once again scattered for the summer recess. But a more direct reason for the discontinuation of the journal was an injunction from the police.<sup>104</sup> In late September, the *National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition* arrived in Shanghai and, with the assistance of Zheng Yefu, Jiang Feng, Liqun, Chen Yanqiao, and others as local hosts, opened at the YMCA on October 2. By then, Tang Yingwei had headed back to Guangzhou, therefore missing forever an opportunity to meet Lu Xun in person.<sup>105</sup>

On October 8, the last day of the exhibition, Lu Xun paid an unannounced visit. Over four years earlier, he had come to the same facility to see an exhibition by the Spring Field Painting Society and had ordered ten prints. Now much weakened physically, he decided that he had to see for himself the largest-ever display of contemporary woodcuts from around the nation. When he showed up, with his felt hat lowered to his eyebrows, other visitors recognized him instantly and the exhibition hall briefly fell into a respectful silence. Among the first to greet him was Cao Bai, who was overjoyed as much as surprised to see a pale and emaciated Lu Xun. Also present were Chen Yanqiao and Huang Xinbo. Together, they accompanied Lu Xun as he viewed the works on display, eagerly seeking his approval as they moved along. About halfway through, Lu Xun grew visibly tired and suggested that they all sit down for a break. Once they were seated in a circle, numerous eager questions from the young men took the conversation in many directions. Witty and sharp as ever, Lu Xun greatly enjoyed the occasion, often bursting into hearty laughter. This lively moment was vividly captured and immortalized by the photographer Sha Fei (1912–1950).<sup>106</sup>

Barely ten days after this spirited visit, Lu Xun was seized by another severe asthma attack and, after much suffering despite the emergency measures taken by his Japanese doctor, passed away in the early morning of October 19 at the age of fifty-five. Cao Bai was among the first to reach Lu Xun's residence after hearing the shocking and grievous news. He brought his good friend Liqun, who had the presence of mind to draw several sketches of Lu Xun on his deathbed. A funeral committee that included Cai Yuanpei, Song Qingling, Uchiyama Kanzō, Agnes Smedley, and Mao Dun was formed. (The initial list also included Mao Zedong, but his name did not appear in the published version.) The committee composed a brief obituary, and later that day half a dozen evening newspapers in Shanghai simultaneously broke the news to the disbelief of many of Lu Xun's friends and associates, some of whom had had reason to believe that he was doing better after a miserable summer.<sup>107</sup> Before Lu Xun's body was removed to the funeral house in the afternoon, the artists Huang Xinbo, Chen Yanqiao, and Situ Qiao were given a chance to commit their last view of Lu Xun to paper.



71 Huang Xinbo, *Lu Xun on His Deathbed*, 1936, wood engraving.

From October 20 to 22, a wake was held at the International Funeral Parlor. Over the entrance decked with flowers was hung a banner that read "We Miss Our Mentor." On the first day of the wake, according to *Shun Pao*, which provided extensive coverage of the passing of this "giant in the literary field," almost 5,300 individuals came to pay their final respects. A large number of the visitors were high school and college students, some representing student unions from outside Shanghai.<sup>108</sup> The flow of mourners continued in the following two days, bringing flowers, wreaths, and elegiac banners that inundated the memorial hall. Among the many condolences from abroad were telegraphs sent by the Soviet VOKS and Yamamoto Sanehiko of the Kaizō Society in Japan. At two o'clock in the afternoon of October 22, fourteen pallbearers, with Cao Bai being the sole representative of the woodcut community, carried the coffin out of the memorial hall and thereupon set in motion a well-organized mass funeral procession. Over six thousand participants formed a slow-moving column that was many street blocks in length and reached the public cemetery in the Hongkou district about two hours later. A solemn funeral ceremony was performed, culminating in a white flag embroidered with two black characters declaring "National Soul" being unfurled on top of the coffin. As dusk fell and a haunting funereal music steadily rose and spread, the coffin was gently lowered into the ground.<sup>109</sup> This somber scene would soon receive its artistic rendition in a wood engraving by Huang Xinbo (fig. 71).

One day after the funeral, *Shun Pao* published a collection of memorial essays, along with a portrait of Lu Xun by the noted cartoonists Cai Ruohong (1910–2002) and Zhang E



(1910–1995). The lead article, “Mourning for Mr. Lu Xun,” by an author with the pen name Yu, was a moving tribute to a spiritual father figure. Pacing around Lu Xun’s coffin, the author wrote, he realized that a piercing dagger should be placed on top of it, because Lu Xun was not merely a great writer, but also the same fighter for human emancipation that Heinrich Heine had declared himself to be. The German poet had once demanded that a dagger be presented as the best memento after his death. A dagger soaked in blood was what the author saw in Lu Xun’s writings and his life. “It is true that Lu Xun is dead, but his impact on the young people will live forever among us. He may belong to the generation of the father, but his spirit belongs to our generation.”<sup>110</sup>

For the community of woodcut artists, the death of Lu Xun meant the loss of a caring mentor and spokesperson. About a week after the funeral, Cao Bai, like many of his contemporaries, tried to cope with the loss by writing down his memories of Lu Xun. Reviewing their interactions in the past few months, Cao Bai realized that what Lu Xun had shown him was a paternal love that he had neither understood nor received before. His was a widely shared sentiment, and in November, he joined thirty or so others in forming the Shanghai Association of Woodcut Makers to express their will to continue Lu Xun’s cause. With Chen Yanqiao, Wozha, Huang Xinbo, Jiang Feng, Liqun, Ma Da (1903–1978), and Zheng Yefu listed as leading members, the new group also represented the latest effort to revive the woodcut movement in the city where it had originated.

The manifesto issued by the Shanghai Association of Woodcut Makers articulated an acute awareness of the historical moment in which the group had decided to come together. It also demonstrated a more deeply embedded historical memory than had characterized the statements of the Modern Prints Society in Guangzhou. Highlighting the oppositional nature of the woodcut movement, it cast the movement’s history as a continuous battle against “darkness and grime,” “defamation and sarcasm,” “trampling and butchering.” The association attributed its determination to the inspiration provided by Lu Xun, yet it also noted that the urgent national crisis demanded that woodcut artists redirect their energy and participate in a united front: “Since woodcuts are a part of the whole culture, we certainly will contribute with utmost sincerity and devote ourselves to the sacred and magnificent movement of national salvation.” While the manifesto’s authors accepted the new priority as necessary and compelling, their wording nonetheless revealed an ambivalence toward relinquishing their political opposition altogether. This was where they found it all the more important to affirm Lu Xun’s legacy.<sup>111</sup>

The manifesto by the Shanghai Association of Woodcut Makers therefore reflected the perplexing situation in which an oppositional and politically committed art movement found itself when a war of national defense was looming large. To question the necessity of defending national sovereignty would result in compromising its basic credibility as well as its legitimacy, whereas to join in a united front would entail disavowing, even if temporarily, its own history and political commitment. This double bind was not at all unfamiliar to Lu Xun, as its constricting implications prompted him to endorse the complex agenda of a “public

literature for a national revolutionary war.” Lu Xun’s untimely death may have made participants in the woodcut movement, especially those gathered in Shanghai, more acutely aware of his relevance, but the final outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937 would usher in a violent disruption that either cut short or suspended many artistic, cultural, and political pursuits.

Nonetheless, even before the outbreak of the war, Cao Bai had bid a mental farewell to Shanghai and the modern art that the city had fostered, on behalf of the woodcut movement. It was a good-bye that had been a long time coming. At the very end of 1936, Cao Bai published an essay offering a critical assessment of contemporary Chinese art in the journal *Midstream*. Drawing on Lu Xun’s valorization of Soviet prints over traditional Chinese literati painting, Cao Bai declared that underneath the dizzyingly colorful art circles in Shanghai was a core of emptiness. Contemporary Chinese painting was vacuous in its content because it had no interest in engaging reality; its technique was also antiquated because rice paper and ink could not create the same powerful effect as artistic mediums from the West. Oil painting in China had been obsessed with impressionism, which in Cao Bai’s view shared the same cultural and aesthetic pretensions as Chinese literati painting. After naming Liu Haisu as a spurious guru whose famed victory in the nude-model debate was a historical accident and who could hardly execute a credible study of the human body in either ink or oil, Cao Bai derided Xu Beihong for being a misplaced loyalist to the French academic tradition. He then went on to deplore that the more talented Lin Fengmian, after some early works dealing conscientiously with agony and protest, should have become obsessed with playing with brilliant colors. Thus Cao Bai concluded: “Native and foreign painting in China—the former is escapist and feudal, and the latter is hedonistic and bourgeois.” The only viable path for Chinese art was prints, because only in prints made by Chinese artists would one see a reflection of contemporary China.<sup>112</sup>

What the Shanghai Association of Woodcut Makers left behind was certainly more than a manifesto or a sweeping denunciation of the art establishment. In the months following its success in Shanghai, the *Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition* continued its tour of many other cities.<sup>113</sup> While this exhibition was still going on, the Shanghai group and the Modern Prints Society in Guangzhou worked together to begin organizing the *Third National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition*. By the summer of 1937, they had collected more than two hundred prints, but then, on July 7, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident finally touched off the Sino-Japanese War. The third exhibition would become one of the innumerable casualties of this war. In September 1937, after the Japanese seized Shanghai, Jiang Feng took some of the collected prints and joined the mass exodus for Hankou, where he and others would organize a woodcut exhibition on the theme of resistance at the beginning of 1938.<sup>114</sup>

Eventually, Jiang Feng would take some of the woodcut works to the Communist-controlled border areas in the northwestern interior. Many woodcut artists would soon converge there, and the woodcut movement would quickly adjust to a profoundly altered environment. The movement would retain its position as a historical avant-garde, but its

expressions and references would be markedly different from its first, urban stage of development. During the prolonged war of resistance, the first generation of woodcut artists would continue to play an active role in the Communist bases as well as in the vast hinterland, including the wartime capital of Chongqing. The woodcut would be recognized as the most graphic, the most practical, and the most prevalent visual medium during the war years, and hardly any other visual art form could now claim the same degree of effectiveness in providing a collective visual documentary of the eight-year war of resistance.





## Conclusion

### THE ORIGINS OF *ROAR, CHINA!* On Vision and Voice in Modern Chinese Art

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First published in the December 1935 issue of *Modern Prints*, the black-and-white print *Roar, China!* (plate 10 and opposite) by Li Hua was subsequently displayed in the *Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition*, which opened in Guangzhou on July 5, 1936. From there, as we have seen, the exhibition traveled to several cities in south-eastern China and arrived in Shanghai at the beginning of October. After a weeklong stop in Shanghai, it then visited more cities and townships in the following months, thereby presenting Li Hua's print, as well as some six hundred other contemporary woodcuts, to hundreds of thousands of viewers across the country.

True to the vision and commitment of the woodcut movement that had emerged in the early 1930s, this second national exhibition brought to its vast audience stark images of current events, of war, flood, and famine, of the disenfranchised and the underrepresented, and of desolate rural and urban lives and landscapes. Participating artists showed little interest either in themes favored by traditional Chinese painting (birds and flowers, winding brooks, distant mountains) or in conventional studio exercises (still lifes and nudes). They also consciously eschewed abstract or idiosyncratic visual languages that would be associated with various modernist schools and undercut a claim to realistic representation. In all these aspects, the second national exhibition was remarkably consistent with its predecessor, the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*, which had originated in Beiping in January 1935. One striking feature that distinguished the second exhibition from the first, however, was the fascination with the thematic and formal concerns evident in *Roar, China!*. At least ten artists, judging by the special issue of *Field of Woodcuts* that served as the exhibition's catalogue, contributed about fourteen prints that sought to depict a collective reverberating voice. This fascination with aural experience and expression was central, for instance, to Tang Yingwei's



*Outcry* and *Women's Voice*, Hu Qizao's *Angry Roar*, Lai Shaoqi's *Roaring China*, and many other works.

The reach of *Roar, China!* went far beyond the traveling exhibition of 1936, however. The print has long been recognized as a masterpiece from the first stage of Li Hua's outstanding career as a woodcut artist. It has also been widely anthologized as a representative work from the first phase of the modern Chinese woodcut movement, which would reach a new horizon after the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937. Indeed, *Roar, China!* articulates the deepest creative aspirations of the Chinese woodcut movement in particular and the logic of the political culture in modern China in general. It also encapsulates a profoundly agitating modern age, in which national awakening and international solidarity were vital to an emancipatory artistic imagination.

More than all the other contemporary prints preoccupied with a similar theme, *Roar, China!* adroitly exploits the visual properties of the woodcut. The taut, muscular, naked male body, bound and blindfolded, is presented in a frontal view. The artist's incisions are decisive, generating lines that are sharp, angular, and animated. By forgoing tonal transitions and accentuating the jagged black lines, the artist gives the constrained body a translucent quality, suggesting a radiating force that charges and electrifies the physical body. In contrast, the encircling rope, its dark weight underscored by neatly arranged dots and triangles, conveys a tightening imposition that is as deliberate as it is impervious to the distressed individual.

While the austere aesthetic and primal scream may readily remind us of expressionist works such as Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (fig. 72) or Käthe Kollwitz's *Never Again War* or (even more directly) *Fettered Man* (fig. 73), Li Hua's creation also invites complex readings and responses.<sup>1</sup> The presence of a dagger and the tantalizing distance between the dagger and the grasping hand of the blindfolded man, for instance, add an element of suspense or a possible narrative to the dramatic situation. Can he reach the weapon? Who put it there in the first place? How is he going to use it? Clearly, these are questions that are impossible to resolve, but they make us realize that part of the afflicted individual's agony is that he is deprived of his vision.

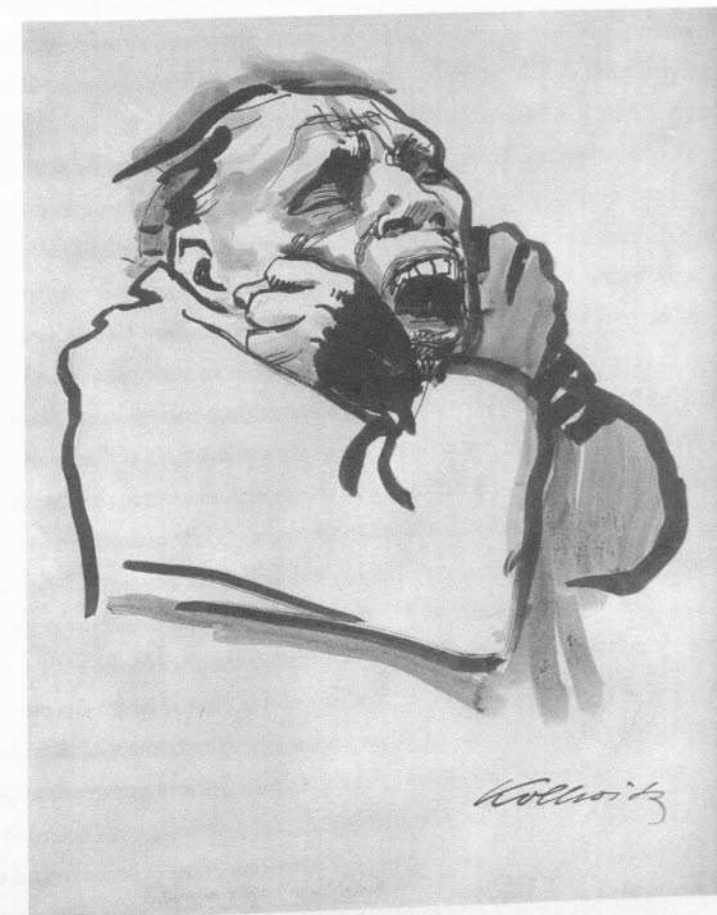
At the same time, the highly dynamic composition, derived from multiple tensions and contrasts, compels our eye to move upward. The first and most obvious contrast in the image, between the horizontally tightening rope and the upright body, is matched by the pull between the struggling man and the stake. The tension is such that the top of the stake, the man's raised right shoulder, and the bottom of the stake form a teetering triangle. This implicit triangle is superimposed by at least two other triangles in the composition: the pyramid formed by the man's two bent legs provides an anchor for his resistance, while the triangle formed by his lifted head, his reaching hand, and his knee on the ground interjects a strong sense of motion and discord. This central, upward triangle also organizes our view and demands from us recognition of the man's agony as well as his desperate fight.

The pinnacle of this primary triangle is the blindfolded man's head, and the most prominent feature here is his wide-open mouth. As we look closely at his agonized expression, a



72 Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, 1895, lithograph.

73 Käthe Kollwitz, *Fettered Man*, 1927, pen and wash.





subtle but crucial shift takes place in the dynamics of the print's visual effect. That the man is prevented from seeing us or returning our gaze now makes us aware of our own position and experience as viewers. Without the possibility of mutual recognition through eye contact, it is left to his voice to reach out to us and appeal to our humanity. In other words, we are prompted to listen for his outcry, and in order to express our compassion and even to reassure him of our presence, we have no choice but to answer him vocally and join him in crying out. The voice, in this instance, serves as the only possible intersubjective medium that connects the blindfolded man and ourselves: if he could but hear our voice, we would succeed in informing him of our recognition of his pain, thereby affirming our own humanity and agency. The conceptual effect of the print, then, is that in front of it we must transform ourselves from silent spectators to active, vocal subjects. United with us in the act of crying out, the bound man is no longer an object for viewing, but a mirror image of our own subject-position.

In this light, the title given to this woodcut is all the more meaningful. The imperative "Roar, China!" makes it clear that the image not so much depicts or represents a vociferous nation as it issues an urgent plea that the nation assert itself through a collective, determined expression. Furthermore, the imperative is addressed not so much to the individual within the frame, who is already screaming, as it is to each and every present and future viewer of the image. The naked and blindfolded man, therefore, cannot be viewed as a metaphoric representation of China; rather, the multiple human voices called forth through his example articulate the nation's presence. In other words, "China" is called into being only when its human subjects actively pledge their allegiance; this coordinated vocalization alone will affirm the subject-position of China as a nation. Li Hua thus expressed his commitment to the nation as a cause and revealed his conception of the artist's role: the artist was to be an agitator as much as a clairvoyant, someone whose mandate it was to awaken the nation.

As we have seen in chapter 5, by the time he made *Roar, China!* Li Hua was a mature artist with experience in a wide range of subject matter in various mediums. In the second half of 1935, he began a series of studies of the screaming human head that would eventually lead to *Roar, China!* While it is fruitful to examine the artist's stylistic search and evolution, it is just as illuminating to understand the theoretical discourse that made Li Hua's artistic pursuits representative of the development of the woodcut movement in general. In this respect, modern Chinese woodcuts owed more than just their visual style and vocabulary to the German expressionist movement. As discussed in chapter 2, the imperative to express oneself spoke loudly to many aspiring poets, writers, and critics in the early 1920s, when the impact of expressionism vibrated through Japan and China. The group particularly influential in popularizing the expressionist ethos and aesthetic was the Creation Society. In embracing neo-romantic poetics, members of the Creation Society put great emphasis on uninhibited self-expression through art and literature.

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, affirmations of an expressive and exuberant individual or genius had given way to a grave discourse on truthfully representing social and historical

reality, due in part to the intellectual reorientation championed by an international revolutionary literature movement. Incidentally, but perhaps logically, the Creation Society was now the most resolute group to advocate a revolutionary literature on behalf of the proletarian masses. Individualist literature was pronounced dead, and the revolutionary poet was called upon to "express life" rather than merely to express his or her interiority. Along with this epistemological shift, the verb *biaoxian* came to govern two separate objects—social life and genuine emotion.

Literally meaning "to bring to the surface" or "to externalize and manifest," *biaoxian*, during this period, was often used to mean both "to express" and "to represent." When followed by the terms for "social life" or "Zeitgeist," the verb described the act of representing or manifesting social reality or the truth about the current age. More specifically, it pointed to an operation through which a hitherto unrecognized or concealed condition was revealed and brought into plain view: for a writer or artist to represent or express social life artistically as well as truthfully, he or she could not be satisfied with representing what there was to see, but rather had to demonstrate how social life *should* be seen. Indicating more than a mechanical and naturalistic "reflection" or "depiction," *biaoxian* acknowledged the necessity of unifying subjective understanding and objective truth, which in turn translated into a determination to render reality through a revelatory artistic vision.

The concept of *biaoxian* was central to the emerging discourse on a modern, avant-garde art and literature. It was part of the critical vocabulary employed by theorists on the left such as Guo Moruo and Jiang Guangci, for whom to represent the revolutionary age was also proactively to hasten its momentous arrival in history. Their liberal-humanist contemporaries, including artists and art educators such as Lin Fengmian and Li Puyuan, would agree that the first objective of an art movement was to promote works of art that expressed a modern consciousness. Yet opinions would diverge not only on how to express or represent such a modern and revolutionary consciousness, but also what this consciousness entailed. When the avowedly modernist Storm Society made its entrance onto the art scene in late 1932, it took on a mandate to resist a stale and vulgar representationalism and to express the irrepressible spirit of the new age by creating a pure pictorial world using dancing lines, colors, and shapes. Yet in contrast to the contemporary woodcut movement, the modernist group never managed to outline or explain the new age that it wished to express.

The rich possibilities of *biaoxian*, meanwhile, intimately informed the theoretical articulations of Li Hua and his fellow woodcut artists. Tang Yingwei, another leading member of the Modern Prints Society, would stipulate that expressive representation was fundamental to a critical realist approach. What made the woodcut a necessary public art, in their collective understanding, was its capacity for insightfully revealing the truth of modern life as a collective struggle for a better future.

The search for a form of expressive representation thus determined two salient features of the woodcut movement during the first half of the 1930s. One was its epistemological commitment to representing the underrepresented—to reorganizing the prevalent visual

order and consciousness by bringing back what had previously been excluded or erased. This commitment directly led the young woodcut artists to populate their prints with peasants, prisoners, beggars, rickshaw pullers, boat trackers, famine victims, war refugees, industrial workers, and political protesters (fig. 74). On this level, *biaoxian* entailed giving visual as well as political representation to subaltern groups whose presence and demands had not been acknowledged. This conceptual goal determined both the populist rhetoric and appeal of the woodcut and the adoption of representational realism as its primary visual language. No other contemporary visual art form, including the nascent art of photography, could claim the same degree of efficacy in portraying ordinary Chinese and documenting their everyday life. Nor did any other visual art form demonstrate a similarly intense ethnographic interest and public concern.

The other significant feature of the woodcut movement at this stage of its development was its investment in reaching and addressing the public as a collective and responsive viewer. Alongside their commitment to a new representational order, woodcut artists sought to exhort their audience to actively change its own situation and destiny. It was the artists' explicit desire to transform the viewer into an expressive subject, whose newly acquired voice would announce its subjectivity and agency. One of the earliest prints to exemplify this commitment to empowerment was Hu Yichuan's *To the Front* (see fig. 30), created in response to the first Shanghai war of 1932. The central figure's desperate call for action reflects the artist's own call, and his relationship to the surging crowd behind him mirrors the artist's self-positioning in relation to potential viewers. What galvanizes this extraordinary image is the reverberating voice that circulates within the frame and resolutely reaches out, demanding to be heard and responded to.

While its commitment to representing the disenfranchised pitted the woodcut movement against prevalent artistic tastes and conventions (epitomized by literati landscape scrolls, postimpressionist still lifes in oil, and the hybrid imagery of happiness seductively projected in commercial posters), the imperative of empowerment compelled the woodcut artists to charge their artistic visions with explicitly political messages. These two guiding principles, which served to reinforce each other, made the woodcut movement a significant ally of the new but potent political left as well as a revolutionary avant-garde in modern Chinese art. It was a truly avant-garde movement because the first generation of woodcut artists not only challenged the existing institution of art, the prevalent visual order, and aesthetic tastes, but also greatly extended the reach, vocabulary, and grammar of the woodcut as an incomparably expedient and politically relevant visual Esperanto of the modern age.

By the mid-1930s, the woodcut had become the preferred artistic medium for advocating the national cause of resisting Japanese military aggression and for voicing political dissent. The positioning of the woodcut as a public, mobilizing art form led almost every woodcut artist to wish to project a resonating voice, whether it was the voice of a larger-than-life individual or that of a unified collective. The consequent aspiration to picture an invisible object so as to inspire passion and action was a challenge that would ultimately entail an



74 Zhang Hui, *Boat Trackers*, 1935, woodcut.

imaginative transgression of the boundary between the visual and the aural. This transposition from one sense to another structurally paralleled the effect that the engaged artist sought to have on his or her audience, for the objective was precisely to transform the viewer into an agent.

The attempt to visually render a voice, to project it, and then to elicit an expressive response from the viewer is a complex operation of evoking and calling forth subjectivity. It is telling, therefore, that almost all the woodcut movement's prints of loud voices from the 1930s, most prominently Li Hua's *Roar, China!*, do not rely on a direct exchange of gazes between the portrayed human figure and the viewer. The voice comes through as an even more proactive force than that of eye contact, one that creates a more visceral relationship between individuals. In short, the deepest conviction of *Roar, China!* was that the conventional poetics of seeing had to be translated and transformed into an empowering politics of speaking and voicing.

That many woodblock prints from the 1930s carried the title *Outcry* was far from a coincidence (fig. 75). Together, they signified a determined reclaiming of the cultural agenda and spiritual heritage of the May Fourth era. *Outcry*, Lu Xun's first collection of short stories, published in 1923, was a key text that helped give modern Chinese literature its historical





75 Xu Lian, *Outcry*, 1935, woodcut.

identity and voice. Long before *Outcry*, however—and long before he created, in “The Diary of a Madman” (1918), the figure of a madman whose final desperate plea is “Save the children”—Lu Xun had optimistically endorsed the liberating force of the romantic poetic imagination, the virtue of which was to give expression to “the voice of one’s heart.”<sup>2</sup> Yet murky and intractable realities in postdynastic Chinese society had quickly coalesced, turning into a suffocating “iron house” in which Lu Xun found himself helplessly trapped and silenced. When a friend invited him to contribute to the nascent New Culture Movement, a skeptical Lu Xun questioned whether it would be an ethical deed to scream inside this seamless iron house and wake up a few unfortunate souls just to let them die an agonizing death. It seemed more merciful, he reasoned, to let them continue sleeping and perish without pain or consciousness. His friend’s retort was a straightforward one: “But if a few awake, you can’t say there is no hope of destroying the iron house.” This assertion of possibility was sufficient to convince Lu Xun, because he agreed that he could not negate hope, and that hope lay in the future: “I could not use my own evidence of nothingness to refute his assertion that it might exist.” As a result, Lu Xun accepted the invitation to write, and the first

story he published was “The Diary of a Madman,” written in colloquial speech. “I sometimes give a few outcries,” he recounted in the preface to *Outcry*, “to encourage those fighters who are galloping on in loneliness, so that they do not lose heart and stop forging ahead.”<sup>3</sup>

In the same preface, Lu Xun gave an account of why in his youth he had decided to turn from medical studies to literature in order to awaken the spirit of his countrymen. As a student in a Japanese classroom, Lu Xun wrote, he had found himself subjected to a slide show that recorded the beheading of a Chinese man accused of spying for the Russians during the 1905 Russo-Japanese War. The executioner was a Japanese officer, and surrounding him was a crowd of meek and wooden Chinese onlookers. The gruesome image drew applause from an audience proud of its newly acquired national strength, but it shook Lu Xun to the core and left him speechless. The unexpected encounter with his countrymen through these photographic images made the young Lu Xun realize that it was much more important to create self-conscious subjects out of passive spectators than to treat their physical ailments. His subsequent decision was to commit himself to literature, and the title he chose for his first collection of short stories many years later still bespoke his belief in the necessity and effect of an arousing voice.

Particularly notable here is Lu Xun’s identification of a haunting image as the strongest motivation for his embrace of the “awakening” metaphor as a moral imperative. This seminal narrative follows the writer’s visceral reaction to a shocking visual document and concludes with his positing a penetrating auditory effect in his literary endeavor. What it underscores is the same impulse that would be shared by future woodcut artists to call forth and arouse human agency against a given order or perception of reality. It would therefore be at best an incomplete reading of the narrative to focus merely on the slide-viewing incident and disregard the “iron house” metaphor and the author’s acceptance of the imperative to cry out. It would be a willfully ahistorical imposition, moreover, to blame Lu Xun for not wanting to become a filmmaker due to his alleged inability to cope with so-called technologized visibility. When happily subscribing to the “all-encompassing force of the visual image in modern and postmodern culture,” one may lose sight of the paradigmatic meaning of Lu Xun’s response to the visual in his commitment to literature and instead see a case of neurosis.<sup>4</sup>

Lu Xun’s account of his reflection on the ethical and existential imperative to cry out remains such an engrossing tale because it dramatizes a fundamental conception of modernity in twentieth-century China. The project of modernization, from its earliest articulation, was intrinsically conceived and promoted as a redemptive effort to “awaken China,” regardless of whether the nation was compared to an overextended dragon, a sleeping lion, or even an enfeebled invalid. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, as John Fitzgerald shows in his study of the political culture of early Republican China, the term “awakening” was “one of the most common expressions to make an appearance in the diaries and autobiographies, the art and literature, the ethics and education, the history and archaeology, the science and medicine, the geography and ethnography, and of course, the politics

of the day.”<sup>5</sup> By reconstructing the successive stages of awakening, first as an intransitive state of self-awareness and then as a transitive awakening of others, Fitzgerald demonstrates “the institutionalization of the idea of a national awakening from an inchoate aspiration into a distinctive style of disciplined mass politics,” producing a complex picture of how a literary and cultural metaphor grew into a political imperative in modern China. This process of translating self-awareness into an agenda of awakening others may be graphically illustrated by the thematic as well as compositional differences between woodblock prints featuring an anguished individual and those urging collective roaring or singing.

Instrumental to the modern mass politics that drew continual inspiration from the metaphor of awakening China were the potentially mobilizing tools of literature, visual arts, and acoustic devices. Indeed, one may argue that aurality was as effective a force in engineering and instituting political modernity in China as were visuality and writing. A history of the sounds and noises of the early twentieth century—from protesting individuals to mass demonstrations, from loudspeakers to sirens, from gramophones to radio broadcasts, from gunshots to air raids—would add great depth to our understanding of the period during which the woodcut movement unfolded. This acoustic history would go directly to the heart of modernity as a political project, because “awakening China” necessitated calling into being new citizens and subjects with an empowering collective voice. Such a history would also serve to debunk the myth of all-encompassing scopic regimes in modern life. The explosive potential of aurality was instinctively grasped by the woodcut artists, who, in imaginatively depicting passionate outcries, articulated the political nature of their artwork.

In the history of Chinese cinema, the inception of the sound era in filmmaking coincided with the emergence of a left-wing cinema, and the adoption of a “national language” in sound films would give the contemporary anti-imperialist movement an ever-clearer audio image and appeal.<sup>6</sup> In early summer 1935, a major achievement by left-wing filmmakers in Shanghai was the feature film *Young People of a Stormy Age*, directed by Xu Xingzhi and filmed by the photographer Wu Yinxian, with a script developed by Xia Yan. The film advocated resistance to Japanese aggression, but it was its theme song that instantly caught on, moving countless viewers and listeners across the country and eventually becoming the national anthem of the People’s Republic a decade and a half later. The lyrics for “March of the Volunteer Army” were written by Tian Han, and the rousing score was composed by Nie Er (1912–1935), who, while recording the song at the Diantong Film Studio, insisted that it be sung by nonprofessionals, enlisting everyone on-site, from carpenter to accountant, to join the chorus.<sup>7</sup> What he wanted to capture was a raw vox populi that would speak to each and every member of the nation. Two central lines from the song were particularly evocative: “The Chinese nation now faces the gravest danger, / and everyone is forced to issue a final outcry.”

The fact that “March of the Volunteer Army” and *Roar, China!* appeared in the same year directs our attention to another layer of historical context, which may be described as intertextuality or a dynamically interactive field of transnational imagination. As early as 1931,

Hu Yichuan had created a print with the title *Roar, China!* (destroyed during the bombing of Shanghai by the Japanese military in January 1932). In the second half of 1934, the woodcut artist Liu Xian, founder of the Unnamed Woodcut Society in Shanghai, made a series of twenty-eight woodblock prints as illustrations for the play *Roar, China!* written by the Soviet futurist poet and playwright Sergei Tret’iakov. The play and its global repercussions from the late 1920s on serve as extraordinary testimony to an unprecedented age of internationalist political solidarity—an age enthralled by the utopian potentials of collective struggles against colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. The same period also witnessed the movement toward revolutionary literature and art in China, during which an anxiety-ridden existential “outcry” gradually gave way to an impassioned and empowering “roar.”

After arriving in Beijing to teach Russian in 1924, Tret’iakov had introduced his Chinese students to, among other things, *The Twelve* by the Soviet poet Aleksandr Blok (1880–1921). Inspired by what he witnessed in the ancient Chinese capital, Tret’iakov soon composed a futurist poem titled “Roar, China!” After further travels across China, especially in the southwest, he then wrote a play about an international incident that takes place in Wanxian, a town located deep inside China, on the upper Yangtze River. The region being part of the British zone of influence, the gunboat *Cockchafer* of the Royal Navy is moored in the Yangtze to safeguard British and other foreign interests. The main dramatic action of the play unfolds when the body of an American merchant is found floating in the river. In response, the British forces threaten to bombard the township and, after a ceremonious funeral for the American, demand to execute two Chinese coolies as a public warning. The agonizing process of deciding whom to sacrifice culminates in the townsfolk becoming aware of their fate and voicing a collective protest. The anger and tension described in the play soon erupted in real life, and on a much larger and more devastating scale. The historic Wanxian Incident of September 5, 1926, also known as the September Fifth Massacre, took place when two British gunboats, *Cockchafer* and *Widgeon*, engaged a local Chinese army and decimated the town of Wanxian, leaving hundreds of civilians dead. The direct cause of the incident was the British attempt to forcibly retrieve two merchant ships that, blamed for crashing into two sampans carrying Chinese soldiers across the Yangtze, had been commandeered by the Chinese in late August. The broader background to the conflict was the May Thirtieth Incident in Shanghai the previous year, which had intensified an anti-British and anti-imperialist sentiment across the country and eventually prepared for the historic Northern Expedition of 1926.

It was a remarkable historical coincidence that Tret’iakov chose Wanxian as the location in which to dramatize the arrogance of imperialist powers and their ruthless exploitation of China, and the prophetic force of his play made it an instant international success.<sup>8</sup> In January 1926, even before the historic Wanxian Incident, Tret’iakov, in collaboration with Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940), director of the aggressively experimental Art Theater in Moscow, produced the play, now named after the playwright’s 1924 poem. The play was then promptly translated and produced in Berlin and Frankfurt, in Tokyo (where it was presented by the Tsukiji Theater in September 1929 as its first public production after this



experimental troupe decided to enter mainstream theater), in New York (by the Theater Guild at the Martin Beck Theater from October to December 1930), and finally in Manchester, England (in a private performance by the Unnamed Society in November 1931).<sup>9</sup> According to a contemporary account by the Chinese dramatist Ouyang Yuqian, a group of Korean residents in Tokyo also wanted to produce the play, but the Japanese police intervened and stopped them from using the title, declaring that China should not be allowed to roar.<sup>10</sup>

In China, it was Tret'iakov's poem "Roar, China!" that first attracted attention. In April 1929, Tao Jingsun, a former member of the outlawed Creation Society, published a translation of the poem under the English title "Roar, Chinese!"<sup>11</sup> A few months later, Chen Shaoshui (1886–1960), the editor of *Mass Entertainment*, the journal that had published the poem, translated the script that the Tsukiji Theater in Tokyo had used in its production of Tret'iakov's play. Within a few weeks, Tian Han serialized a lengthy review of Chen Shaoshui's translation in his *Southern Weekly*, accompanying his review with photographs of the Tsukiji production.

In his review, Tian Han indicated that he had already introduced the play in June 1928, in an irregular publication called *The South (Le Midi)*, drawing on information provided by Kurahara Korehito, a leading Marxist critic in contemporary Japan. (Evidently, Kurahara had seen the play at the Meyerhold Theater during a seven-month-long journey across the Soviet Union.) While recounting the main action of the play and its techniques, Tian Han commented that Meyerhold's famed method of "biomechanics" determined that the new theater emphasized collectivity over individuality, and also noted that he was encouraged that such a play should have been performed in Japan, an aggressive member of the imperialist powers. The angry protests by the dockhands, boatmen, their wives, students, and citizens onstage, observed Tian Han, foretold the rising of the oppressed class. "Indeed, a China that is as unglued and desolate as a desert needs just such an 'art of outcry'!"<sup>12</sup>

In May 1930, a second translation, offered by Shen Xiling of the China College of Art, appeared in the left-wing literary journal *Public Literature*. A note on the translation suggested that it was the script for a production by the Society of Art Theaters that was to take place in May 1930; the production never materialized, however, because the police disbanded the group in late April. It was in Guangzhou that the play *Roar China!* was first produced, in the summer of 1930. Directed by Ouyang Yuqian, who also played the comprador Tai Lee, the production was based on Chen Shaoshui's translation and incorporated as extras more than a hundred students from the Guangdong Drama Research Institute, formed by Ouyang in 1928. When it was staged at the provincial headquarters of the Nationalist Party, the play generated much emotion both on- and offstage and was a sensational success. The experience was recorded with much excitement in *Drama*, a monthly publication of the Guangdong Drama Research Institute, and added enthusiastic momentum to the notion of a "people's drama" among Ouyang and his colleagues.<sup>13</sup> A few months later, a smaller-scale production took place in the same city. In the fall of 1934, according to Ouyang Yuqian, a coalition of theater troupes in Guangzhou staged yet another, revised version of *Roar, China!* This time,

the play was performed in the Guangzhou Municipal Hall of Popular Education, where the Modern Prints Society would hold its second monthly show from October 23 to 26.<sup>14</sup>

Between 1931 and 1932, several attempts were made to bring *Roar, China!* to the stage in Nanjing and Shanghai, but, for one reason or another, none was successful.<sup>15</sup> In the meantime, the transnational journey of *Roar, China!* from the Soviet Union to Japan to the United States continued to bring to Chinese artists, playwrights, and directors an exhilarating sense of international solidarity among victims of imperialism. In April 1931, three issues of *Literary and Artistic News* carried a long essay by the critic and future filmmaker Sun Shiyi (1904–1966) on the New York production of *Roar, China!*, which, it was reported, had logged more than seventy performances. That the play should have been produced in the United States ("the pinnacle of capitalism") illustrated, in Sun Shiyi's view, that "the horizontal difference among nations in the contemporary world is no longer the ultimate difference, because our consciousness of this difference is gradually being replaced by a sharper and more real difference, which may be described as revealing a vertical view of the world." The New York production also testified to the universal appeal of the play. Sun Shiyi commended Tret'iakov for strengthening the connection among the oppressed classes of the world, but he also remarked that the Chinese suffering from imperialism and capitalism should themselves speak. "We really need," he wrote, echoing Tian Han's 1929 urging, "an art of outcries and protests."<sup>16</sup>

Following the Manchurian Incident on September 18, 1931, the ever-more-critical cause of defending national sovereignty found an explicit rallying cry in the imperative "Roar, China!" In December 1931, for instance, the first issue of a semimonthly titled *Crossroads*, published by the Zuolian with Lu Xun and Feng Xuefeng among its editors, opened with an essay that used "Roar, China!" as its evocative title. "Now is the time for us to unite and issue a collective outcry," urged the essayist, who also observed that a roaring Chinese nation would find supporting voices in every part of the world: "From New York, Berlin, Paris, London, Rome, to Tokyo, from India, Korea, Annam to obscure places in Africa, the native tribes in Taiwan, and other little-noticed corners, comes forth the same sonorous battle cry." Amid such global mobilization and collective expression, concluded the essayist, Chinese writers and artists could not but contribute their own voice and be united in the cause of fighting imperialism.<sup>17</sup>

In September 1933, on the eve of the second anniversary of the Manchurian Incident, the play *Roar, China!* finally came to Shanghai, a city that had witnessed the historic May Thirtieth Incident in 1925 and had been the center of a persistent left-wing cultural movement since the late 1920s. The production was organized and directed by the dramatist-filmmaker Ying Yunwei (1904–1967). When the show opened, Tian Han published a short newspaper article to call public attention to the event. With the approach of a second world war that aimed to partition China, he demanded, should members of the nation not all cry "Roar, China!"<sup>18</sup> (In the wake of the Manchurian Incident, Tian Han himself had written plays and film scripts for the "art of outcry" that he had called for. One of his several film scripts from this period was titled *Roaring China*, although it was never made into a film.<sup>19</sup>) The

September 1933 production of the play, which brought close to a hundred actors and actresses onstage, was sponsored by the left-wing literary and theater groups in Shanghai, but its central anti-imperialist message had a broad appeal and was embraced by the liberal establishment as well as the right-leaning Nationalist camp.<sup>20</sup> The play was performed again in October on the occasion of National Day. Following this event, yet another translation of *Roar, China!* was published by the Liangyou Press in 1935. The translator was Pan Jie'nong, a former member of the Undertaking Society. This latest Chinese translation came with photographs of the Shanghai production as well as set-design blueprints.

By the time Li Hua's highly evocative print appeared in late 1935, *Roar, China!* had been circulating as a transnational political rallying call and a multimedia project for over a decade. From the initial Tret'iakov poem to the international staging of his play, to "the final outcry" that "March of the Volunteer Army," as a film theme song, both vocalized and inspired in 1935, "Roar, China!" had grown to be a deeply resonant expression that signified an urgent moral as well as historical imperative, an impassioned artistic intervention on an unprecedented global scale, and an uplifting vision of political solidarity among colonized and oppressed nations around the world. "China," in this instance, not only stood for one specific nation, but also applied to all other violated nations or peoples requiring a voice of their own. "Roar, China!," in other words, described an emancipatory struggle of universal relevance.

This ultimately universalist vision may explain why the male figure in Li Hua's print *Roar, China!* is naked. By removing all markers of social, cultural, and national particularities from the constrained human figure, the artist achieved a much broader appeal. From the image itself, there is no indication that the figure cries out in Chinese, or even that he himself is necessarily Chinese. Yet, as I observed above, the historical specificity of this woodcut lies in the naming of the desperate voice, in the calling forth of a national identity, and in the articulation of a collective mission. This tension between representing a universal condition and urging concrete action in the present, vividly captured and displayed in this woodcut, may be the source of the enduring power of *Roar, China!* in particular and of great modern artworks in general.

The expression "Roar, China!" would become all the more pertinent when imperialist Japan finally unleashed its military force on the rest of China in July 1937. Two months prior to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which marked the onset of the brutal eight-year Sino-Japanese War, a fresh woodblock print called *Roar, China!* appeared in a local newspaper in Chongqing, the soon-to-be wartime capital of Republican China. The artist was Feng Zhongtie (1917–1998), who in 1935, as a teenager, had started making woodcuts in Shanghai and in early 1937 had returned to his home province of Sichuan to organize a woodcut society in Chongqing.<sup>21</sup> The outbreak of the war would indeed push the woodcut movement far into the hinterland, presenting woodcut artists with fresh landscapes and enduring subject matter.

On September 6, 1937, yet another outcry of "Roar, China!" was heard, this time from the other side of the world. Langston Hughes, whose brief visit to the "incredible Shang-

hai" in July 1933 had left him with indelible images of poverty, human suffering, and child labor, and who had also been "constantly amazed in Shanghai at the impudence of white foreigners in drawing a color line against the Chinese in China itself,"<sup>22</sup> published his poem "Roar, China!" in *Volunteer for Liberty: Organ of the International Brigades*. At the time he wrote the poem, Hughes was participating in the Spanish Civil War, and the poem was dated "Madrid, August 29, 1937." A key figure of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, Hughes may have seen the Theater Guild's production of *Roar, China!* in New York in late 1930; he was certainly aware of Tret'iakov and the international renown of his play.<sup>23</sup> He may even have come across Tret'iakov's 1924 poem of the same title during his sojourn in Moscow over the long summer of 1932. In any event, the observant poet felt compelled to address the "old dragon of the East" by what he saw and heard during his trip to Shanghai, and found in "Roar, China!" an apt metaphor and expression. First sympathizing with the sleepy giant upon whom "THEY" had imposed gunboats, concessions, zones of influence, international settlements, missionary houses, banks, and "Jim Crow Y.M.C.A's," Hughes then brought his poem to a rousing crescendo, urging the dragon of the East to open its mouth and to laugh, to spit fire, to swallow gunboats, to eat bullets, to smash iron gates, to stand up, to roar! A sonorous and eloquent voice was thereby added to the global outcry and affirmed once again the inspiring solidarity of an international anti-imperialist movement that cut across color lines and national boundaries:

Laugh—and roar, China! Time to spit fire!  
 Open your mouth, old dragon of the East.  
 To swallow up the gunboats in the Yangtse!  
 Swallow up the foreign planes in your sky!  
 Eat bullets, old maker of firecrackers—  
 And spit out freedom in the face of your enemies!  
 Break the chains of the East,  
     Little coolie boy!  
 Break the chains of the East,  
     Red generals!  
 Break the chains of the East,  
     Child slaves in the factories!  
 Smash the iron gates of the Concessions!  
 Smash the pious doors of the missionary houses!  
 Smash the revolving doors of the Jim Crow Y.M.C.A's!  
 Crush the enemies of land and bread and freedom!  
 Stand up and roar, China!  
 You know what you want!  
 The only way to get it is  
 To take it!  
 Roar, China!<sup>24</sup>



A list of abbreviations used for frequently cited titles is found on p. 279.

# INTRODUCTION

1. See Agnes Smedley, *The Chinese Woodcut: A New Art Form for the 400 Million* (New York: Touchstone, 1948). In their unique study, Laure Barbizet and Serge Vincent-Vidal show through statistical analysis that the dominant themes of modern Chinese woodcuts are the rural world, urban and industrial landscapes, intellectuals and their struggle, the family, and war. See Barbizet and Vincent-Vidal, *Le contexte économique et social d'une production culturelle: La gravure sur bois dans la Chine des années 1930-1949* (Paris: Centre de Recherches sur la Chine Contemporaine de l'Université de Paris VIII, 1981), 187-212.

2. Feng Zikai, "Jianglai de huihua" (Painting of the future), dated April 24, 1934, in Feng Zikai, *Yishu conghua* (Shanghai: Liangyou Press, 1935), 60-70. For a recent study of Feng Zikai, see Geremie R. Barmé, *An Artistic Exile: A Life of Feng Zikai (1898-1975)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

3. See Yingxing (Feng Zikai), "Zhongguo yishu zai xiandai yishu shang de shengli" (The triumph of Chinese fine arts in modern art), *Dongfang zazhi* 27, no. 1 (January 1930), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, eds., *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua, 1997), 1: 240-69.

4. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in his *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 240.

5. *Ibid.*, 237.

6. See, for instance, Gennifer Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde 1905-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), esp. chapter 1, "Western-Style Painting in Japan: Mimesis, Individualism, and Japanese Nationhood," 11-27. Weisenfeld's study reveals many parallels between the Mavo group in Japan of the 1920s and the Chinese avant-garde discussed in the following chapters.

7. Quoted in LHSNP, 5.

8. Huang Binhong, "Lun Zhongguo yishu zhi jianglai," in *Huang Binhong wenji: shuhua bian* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua, 1999), 2: 7-11.

9. See "Fakan yu" (On the publication of the journal), *Guohua yuekan* 1 (November 1934), unpaginated.

10. Peter Bürger offers a convincing analysis of the European avant-garde in his *Theory of the Avant-garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

11. Ibid., 22-23.
12. Li Hua, Xinbo, Jian'an, Bingxiong, Wen Tao, "Shinian lai Zhongguo muke yundong de zong jiantao," *Muyi* (The art of the woodcut) 1 (November 1, 1940), reprinted in *Hanning dadi* (Changsha: Hunan meishu, 2000), Appendix, 6-14.
13. See Charles Merewether, "An Interview with Wang Guangyi on the Socialist Visual Experience," dated July 18, 2002, in *Wang Guangyi* (Beijing: Timezone 8, 2002), 24-35.
14. See, for instance, Li Yunjing, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin, 1996); Fan Meng, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi* (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian, 1997); Lu Di, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1987); Chen Yanqiao, *Xin Zhongguo de muke* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1951); Tang Yingwei, *Zhongguo xiandai muke shi* (Chongqing: Zhongguo muke yongpin hezuogongchang, 1944); *Hanning dadi: 1930-1949 Guotonggu muke banhua ji* (Changsha: Hunan meishu, 2000); *Zhongguo xinxing banhua wushinian ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu, 1981), 2 vols.; *Chugoku gendai hangaten, 1931-1987* (Tokyo: Machida Municipal International Print Museum, 1988).
15. See Ellen Johnston Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Michael Sullivan, "The Woodcut Movement," in his *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 80-90; Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, "The Modern Woodcut Movement," in their *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998), 213-25; Kuiyi Shen, "The Modernist Woodcut Movement in 1930s China," in Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Ken Lun, and Zheng Shengtian, eds., *Shanghai Modern: 1919-1945* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 262-82. For a survey of the contemporary scene, see Christer von der Burg, ed., *The Art of Contemporary Chinese Woodcuts* (London: The Muban Foundation, 2003), and Anne Farrer, ed., *Chinese Printmaking Today: Woodblock Printing in China 1980-2000* (London: The British Library, 2003). For a general history, see Li Hua, *Chinese Woodcuts* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1995).
16. See Shirley Hsiao-ling Sun, "Lu Hsun and the Chinese Woodcut Movement: 1929-1935" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1974), and her *Modern Chinese Woodcuts* (San Francisco: Chinese Culture Foundation, 1979).

## CHAPTER 1: THE BEAUTIFUL OBJECT OF ART

1. Zhou Shoujuan, "Shiqi sui la," *Shenbao* (Shun Pao), New Year's Extra, January 1, 1928, 1.
2. See Li Jinfa, *Fusheng zongji* (General account of a floating life), first serialized from October 1964 to April 1966, reprinted in *Li Jinfa huiyilu* (Shanghai: Dongfang chubun zhongxin, 1998), 64-74.
3. Li Jinfa, "Wuguo yishu jiaoyu zhi xianzhuang yu jianglai," *Shenbao*, New Year's Extra, January 1, 1928, 2.
4. *Shenbao*, November 28, 1927, quoted in Wang Shiru, ed., *Cai Yuanpei xiansheng nianpu* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1998), 2: 510-11.
5. See Cai Yuanpei, "Zixie nianpu" (Chronological autobiography), CYPQJ, 7: 267-323, esp. 298-303. See also Wang Shiru, *Cai Yuanpei xiansheng nianpu*, 1: 106-109, for a list of courses Cai Yuanpei took at the University of Leipzig.
6. See Huang Zhaozhong, *Yidai renshi—Cai Yuanpei zhuan* (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo, 1982), 69-75; William J. Duiker, *Tsai Yuan-p'ei, Educator of Modern China* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 42.
7. Cai Yuanpei, "Duiyu xin jiaoyu zhi yijian," first serialized in February 1912, reprinted in CYPQJ, 2: 130-37. See also Duiker, *Tsai Yuan-p'ei*, 44-48.
8. Cai Yuanpei, "Duiyu xin jiaoyu zhi yijian," 134.
9. See a contemporary report in *Minli bao* (Popular independence), July 20, 1912, quoted in Wang, *Cai Yuanpei xiansheng nianpu*, 1: 143.

10. Quoted in Zhou Tiandu, *Cai Yuanpei zhuan* (Beijing: Renmin, 1984), 58. Zhou Tiandu explains that because most participants in the provisional educational conference were not ready to accept the term "worldview education," it was not included in the statement.

11. See LXNP, 1: 254-55.
12. On July 12, 1912, when it was rumored that because Cai Yuanpei had resigned from the Ministry of Education, his proposal for aesthetic education would therefore be dropped from discussion at the provisional educational conference then under way, Lu Xun wrote in his diary to vent his frustration and contempt for those who could not understand the meaning of such a proposal: "Such pigs and dogs, how pathetic!" See LXQJ, 14: 9. For a general study of this period of Lu Xun's life, see Sun Ying, *Lu Xun zai jiaoyubu* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1979).
13. See Wang Xinqi, *Lu Xun meishu nianpu* (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu, 1986), 38.
14. For a discussion of these terms and their use in the Chinese and Japanese contexts, see Chen Zhenlian, *Jindai Zhong Ri huihua jiaoliu shi bijiao yanjiu* (Hefei: Anhui meishu, 2000), esp. 50-69.
15. Lu Xun, "Ni bobu meishu yijian shu," first published in February 1913, reprinted in LXQJ, 8: 45-49.
16. In November 1916, a coalition of senators and representatives of the restored parliament formed the Protecting the State Religion Society and telegraphed military leaders of the provinces for support. This led to a nationwide campaign for the creation of a state religion. Kang Youwei, who had been promoting Confucianism as a state religion since 1912, was a key intellectual leader of this movement.
17. Cai Yuanpei, "Yi meiyu dai zongjiao shuo," first published on August 1, 1917, reprinted in CYPQJ, 3: 30-34. For an English translation by Julia F. Andrews, see Kirk Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 182-89.
18. See Cai Yuanpei, "Guoli meishu xuexiao chengli ji kaixueshi yanshuoci" (Speech at the founding and inauguration of the National Fine Arts College), dated April 15, 1918, in CYPQJ, 3: 147-48; "Beida huafa yanjiuhui zhiqiu shu" (Statement on the principles and interests of the Painting Method Research Society of Peking University), dated April 15, 1918, in CYPQJ, 3: 156-57.
19. See Cai Yuanpei, "Zai Beida huafa yanjiuhui yanshuoci" (Speech at the Peking University Painting Method Research Society), dated October 22, 1918, in CYPQJ, 3: 207-209.
20. Cai Yuanpei, "Zai Beida huafa yanjiuhui qiuji huiyi yanshuoci" (Speech at the autumn meeting of the Peking University Painting Method Research Society), dated October 11, 1919, in CYPQJ, 3: 347.
21. Kang Youwei, "Wanmu caotang canghua mu (jiexuan)" (Catalogue of the art collection at the hut of ten thousand trees [excerpt]), in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, eds., *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua, 1997), 1: 21-25.
22. See Mayching Margaret Kao, "China's Response to the West in Art: 1898-1937" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1972), 60-66, for a general description of this period and the curricular developments at new-style art schools.
23. See Zheng Gong, *Yanjin yu yundong: Zhongguo meishu de xiandaihua, 1875-1976* (Nanning: Guangxi meishu, 2002), 66-79.
24. See Wu Mengfei, "Wusi' yundong qianhou de meishu jiaoyu huiyi pianduan" (Reminiscences of fine arts education before and after the May Fourth Movement), *Meishu yanjiu* 3 (1959), 42-46.
25. See "Beijing meishu xuexiao xueze (xuanlu)" (Guidelines for the Beijing fine arts college [selections]), issued on July 5, 1918, in Zhang Xian and Zhang Yuan, eds., *Zhongguo jinxindai yishu jiaoyu fagui huibian, 1840-1949* (Beijing: Kexue jiaoyu, 1997), 121-27.
26. For a succinct discussion of the Gao brothers' contributions, see Christina Chu, "The Lingnan School and Its Followers: Radical Innovation in Southern China," in Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998), 64-95.
27. Art exhibitions organized in 1908 and 1909 by Gao Jianfu and others were reported in *Shishi huabao* (Current events pictorial), which Gao Jianfu had helped create in 1905. See Li Weiming et al.,



eds., *Gao Jianfu shiwen chubian* (Guangzhou: Guangdong gaodeng jiaoyu, 1999), 3, n. 1. The first reported exhibition, in 1908, still featured "painting and drawing" (*tuhua*); the second was called a "fine arts exhibition" (*meishu zhanlanhui*). These exhibitions have been credited as the first-ever Western-style exhibitions in modern China.

28. Ralph Croizier, *Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906-1951* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 56.

29. See Chen Shuren, "Xin hua fa," *Zhenxiang huabao* 7 (August 1, 1912), 13-14. In 1914, the Gao brothers' Aesthetics Press issued Chen's *Xin hua fa* as a pamphlet, with an introduction by Huang Binhong.

30. For a discussion of Chen Shuren's text, see Kao, "China's Response to the West in Art," 86-88.

31. See Chen Duxiu, "Wenxue geming lun" (On literary revolution), *Xin qingnian* 2, no. 6 (February 1917), English translation by Timothy Wong, in Denton, *Modern Chinese Literary Thought*, 140-45.

32. Duiker, *Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei*, 55.

33. Lin Yutang, "Ji Cai Jiemin xiansheng" (Remembrances of Mr. Cai Yuanpei), quoted in Huang Zhaoheng, *Yidai renshi*, 90.

34. For a detailed account of Cai Yuanpei's involvement in the May Fourth Movement, his forced departure from Beijing, and his triumphant return, see Zhou Tiandu, *Cai Yuanpei zhuan*, 161-93.

35. Cai Yuanpei, "Wenhua yundong buyao wangle meiyu" (The cultural movement ought not to forget aesthetic education), first published on December 1, 1919, reprinted in CYPQJ, 3: 361.

36. Ellen Johnston Laing, *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early-Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 3.

37. C. E. Darwent, *Shanghai: A Handbook for Travellers and Residents*, 2nd ed. (Shanghai, 1920), 79, quoted in Michael Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 30.

38. See Li Chao, *Shanghai youhua shi* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu, 1995), 5-8.

39. In Zheng Gong's list of private art schools and colleges from 1900 to 1949, the first nine were all formed in Shanghai, the earliest being the Professional School of Drawing and Music created in 1907. See his *Yanjin yu yundong*, 93.

40. From an advertisement that first appeared in *Shun Pao* on January 28, 1913; see LHSNP, 5.

41. Liu Haisu, "Shanghai meizhuan shinian huigu" (A review of the Shanghai Fine Arts College in its first ten years), first published on July 20, 1922, quoted in LHSNP, 5.

42. Zhou Xiang published a public notice in *Shun Pao* on August 9, 1913, which was followed by a rebuttal from the Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts; see LHSNP, 6. Liu Haisu had briefly attended Zhou Xiang's Learning Center for Backdrop Painting prior to creating his own school.

43. See Liu Haisu, "Shanghai meizhuan shinian huigu," quoted in LHSNP, 41.

44. For an account of the impact of the use of nude models on modern Chinese art, see An Yalan (Julia F. Andrews), "Luotihua lunzheng ji xiandai Zhongguo meishu shi de jian'gou" (The controversy over paintings of the nude and the construction of modern Chinese art history), in *Haipai huibhua yanjiu wenji* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua, 2001), 117-50.

45. Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, 31.

46. See Liu Haisu, "Huiyi Cai Yuanpei" (In memory of Cai Yuanpei), in Shen Hu, ed., *Liu Haisu sanwen* (Guangzhou: Huacheng, 1999), 159.

47. See Liu Haisu, "Lun jiuguo" (Save the nation), quoted in LHSNP, 24.

48. See Cai Yuanpei, "Jieshao huajia Liu Haisu" (An introduction to artist Liu Haisu), first published on January 15, 1922, reprinted in CYPQJ, 4: 140-43. On January 18, 1922, the *Beijing Morning Post* published a glowing review, in which the inspired commentator urged Liu to become a "pure artist" and to initiate a "new era in the history of Chinese art." See Shi Wan, "Kanle Liu Haisu huibhua zhanlan zhijou" (After viewing the Liu Haisu art exhibition), reprinted in *Liu Haisu yanjiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao, 2000), 171-73.

49. See the column "Yishujie xiaoxi" (News from the art field) in *Yishu pinglun* 69 (August 25, 1924), 7. Here it was reported that sources in France had learned that a Shanghai artist named Liu had written to an art student studying in France, asking him to return to China to replace Liu as a dean, since he was going to assume the deanship at the Beijing Fine Arts College.

50. Geng Yan (Lu Xun), "Meishu zazhi diyi qi" (The first issue of *Fine Arts* magazine), first published on December 29, 1918, reprinted in *Lu Xun meishu lunji* (Kunming: Yunnan renmin, 1982), 7-8.

51. See Lü Cheng, "Meishu geming" (A revolution in fine arts), *Xin qingnian* 6, no. 1 (January 15, 1919), 84-85.

52. Chen Duxiu, "Meishu geming" (A revolution in fine arts), *Xin qingnian* 6, no. 1 (January 15, 1919), 85-86.

53. Xu Beihong, "Zhongguohua gailiang lun," first published in 1920, reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, 1: 38-42.

54. Chen Hengke, "Wenrenhua de jiazhi," first published in 1921, reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, 1: 63-66.

55. See, for instance, Fang Rending, "Wenren hua yu suren hua" (Literati painting and layman painting), first published on June 2, 1927, reprinted in Huang Xiaogen and Wu Jin, eds., *Guangdong xian-dai huatan shilu* (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu, 1990), 38-40. Fang Rending accepted Chen Hengke's definition of literati painting, but rejected the genre for being far removed from nature and reality and for "missing the fundamental principle of making art."

56. "Jiju jiankuo de xuanyan" (A manifesto in a few brief sentences), *Meiyu* 1 (April 1920), 1-2.

57. See Zhou Lingsun, "Xin wenhua yundong he meiyu," *Meiyu* 3 (June 1920), 1-16.

58. Ouyang Yuqian, "Minzhu de wenyi yu guizu de wenyi," *Meiyu* 1 (April 1920), 29-32.

59. Yu Jifan, "Demokelaxi de yishu," *Meiyu* 4 (July 1920), 4-11.

60. See Liu Haisu, *Riben xin meishu de xin yinxiang* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1921), 5. Lü Cheng wrote a preface to this book.

61. *Ibid.*, 166.

62. Lü Cheng, "Shenme shi minzhong yishu?" (What is people's art?), *Meiyu* 5 (September 1920), 1-3.

63. Tang Juan, "Yishu duli lun he yishu rensheng lun de pipan" (A critique of the doctrine of art for art and the doctrine of art for life), *Dongfang zazhi* 18, no. 17 (September 1, 1921), 45-50. In 1923, Tang Juan traveled to France, where he was impressed by the country's numerous art museums and galleries. In a detailed report titled "Art Museums in France," published in *Eastern Miscellany* in March 1925, Tang Juan took readers in his homeland on an extensive tour of seven noted institutions, including the Louvre, Panthéon, Musée du Luxembourg, Palais des Beaux-Arts, and Musée Rodin. In addition to describing each location, Tang Juan provided information on the important artists whose works were on display there, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Diego Velázquez, Peter Paul Rubens, Jacques-Louis David, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Jean-François Millet, and Édouard Manet. See Tang Juan, "Falanxi zhi meishu yuan," *Dongfang zazhi* 22, no. 6 (March 25, 1925), 46-58. The same issue of *Eastern Miscellany* included reproductions of ten works by French artists as an accompaniment to Tang Juan's article.

64. Cai Yuanpei, "Meiyu shishi de fangfa" (Means of implementing aesthetic education), first published in June 1922, reprinted in CYPQJ, 4: 211-17. See also Cai Shangsi, *Cai Yuanpei xueshu sixiang zhuanji: Cai Yuanpei yu Zhongguo xueshu sixiang jie* (Shanghai: Tangdi, 1950), 319-20.

65. Zhou Qin hao managed to elicit several hundred submissions and publicized the show in *Art Review*, the weekly supplement that he and others edited for *The Republican Daily News*. As the exhibition's opening date in August 1924 drew close, however, a large number of the submissions, especially oil paintings, could not reach the exhibition site in the French Concession due to fierce fighting among warlords outside Shanghai. See "Yishujie xiaoxi," *Yishu pinglun* 70 (September 1, 1924), 7. The same weekly also published the exhibition charter on August 4, which noted that some of the paintings on display would be for sale, with the organizer levying a twenty-percent commission on all transactions.

66. Zheng Gong, in his *Yanjin yu yundong*, 93-95, lists about twenty private art departments, schools, and colleges appearing between 1917 and 1926. The list does not include the government-sponsored Guangzhou Municipal School of Fine Arts or the several other private art schools in the Guangzhou area.
67. On March 26, 1927, *Art Field Weekly* published a special issue (no. 10) on the crisis at the Shanghai Meizhuan with all pertinent documents, including "Qu Liu xuanyan" (Manifesto on driving out Liu), written by the students.
68. Zhu Yingpeng, "Zhongshan daxue she yishuke de tiyi" (A proposal for an art department at Sun Yat-sen University), *Yishujie* 14 (April 23, 1927), 1-4. The New China Art College was formed at the beginning of 1927 by a group of faculty members who had left the Shanghai Meizhuan after the student unrest; the group was headed by Yu Jifan. The China College of Art, based on the former Shanghai Art Teachers' College, was created in 1926. For an account of art education and colleges during this period, see Zhu Boxiong and Chen Ruilin, *Zhongguo xihua wushi nian: 1898-1949* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1989), 70-103.
69. See Wu Wan, "Ershiwu nian lai Guangzhou huihua yinxiang" (Impressions of painting in Guangzhou in the past twenty-five years), *Qingnian yishu* 1 (1937), reprinted in Huang Xiaogen and Wu Jin, *Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu*, 142-54.
70. See Shang Hui, *Yan Wenliang yanjiu* (Nanjing: Jiangsu meishu, 1993), 27, 34-35.
71. For an account of the controversy, see Zhu Boxiong and Chen Ruilin, *Zhongguo xihua wushi nian*, 50-62.
72. See *ibid.*, 49-50, 71, for a summary of these two schools' curricula and faculty. See also Zhang Shaoxia and Li Xiaoshan, *Zhongguo xiandai huihua shi* (Nanjing: Jiangsu meishu, 1986), 40-41, for further information.
73. See Li Chao, *Shanghai youhua shi*, 53.
74. See Zhang Fuling, *Zhu Qizhan* (Jinan: Shandong huabao, 2001), 40-41.
75. For a relevant study, see Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: A View from Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).
76. See Craig Clunas, "Chinese Art and Chinese Artists in France, 1924-1925," *Arts Asiatiques* 44 (1989), 100-106. See Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Ken Lun, and Zheng Shengtian, eds., *Shanghai Modern: 1919-1945* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 22-23, for an account of the Strasbourg exhibition and a photograph of the original catalogue.
77. See Zheng Chao, "Lin Fengmian zaoqi de huihua yishu" (Lin Fengmian's early pictorial art), *Meishu shilun* 2 (1985), 33-42, esp. 36.
78. For an account of Lin Fengmian's European experience, see Sonia Lightfoot, "Harmonizing Eastern and Western Art," in *Lin Fengmian yu ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu: Guoji shuxu taolunhui lunwenji* (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan, 1999), 2: 744-63.
79. Sullivan, *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*, 40.
80. See David Clarke, "Exile from Tradition: Chinese and Western Traits in the Art of Lin Fengmian," in *Lin Fengmian yu ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu*, 2: 732.
81. See Yang Zheng, "Xiyang huajia Lin Fengmian jun zhi jiezuo" (Masterpieces by Western-style painter Lin Fengmian), serialized in *Yishu pinglun* 48 and 50 (March 24 and April 7, 1924). Other paintings mentioned in this article include *Berlin* and *Les Coiffes blanches et la mer*. In Yang Zheng's view, Lin's works could be divided into two groups: those describing reality (depicting either the aristocracy or commoners), and those expressing ideas (engaging either history or concepts). A monochromatic reproduction of *Groping in the Dark* appeared as an insert in *Dongfang zazhi* 21, no. 16 (August 25, 1924).
82. See, for instance, Zhu Yingpeng, "Lin Fengmian jun de geren zhanlanhui" (The individual show by Mr. Lin Fengmian), in Zhu Yingpeng, Fu Yanchang, and Zhang Ruogu, *Yishu sanjia yan* (Shanghai: Liangyou Press, 1927), 204-207.
83. See Clunas, "Chinese Art and Chinese Artists in France," 104-105, for a description of the ten-

sion between what the Strasbourg exhibition represented and "the very traditional styles of export handicraft" in the Chinese section.

84. Recorded in Li Feng, "Lü Ou huaren diyici juxing Zhongguo meishu zhanlan dahui zhi shengkuang" (The spectacular event of the first exhibition of Chinese art organized by Chinese traveling in Europe), *Dongfang zazhi* 21, no. 16 (August 25, 1924), 30-36, esp. 32.
85. See Cai Yuanpei's preface to the catalogue of the Strasbourg exhibition and his speech at a reception dinner on May 22, 1924, both in *ibid.*, 33-35.
86. See LHSNP, 63.
87. For photographs of the catalogue and the entrance to the Chinese section, see Danzker, Ken Lun, and Zheng Shengtian, *Shanghai Modern*, 22.
88. See Xu Zhihao, *Zhongguo meishu tuanti manlu* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua, 1994), 33-34.
89. See Liu Haisu, "Tianma hui jiujiu shi shenme?" (What is the Celestial Horse Society after all?), first published on August 4, 1923, quoted in Li Chao, *Shanghai youhua shi*, 52. The name "Celestial Horse Society" struck a group of Chinese art students studying in Paris as absurdly pretentious. In August 1921, they formed the Celestial Hound Society as a parody. This group included Xie Shoukang, Chang Yu, Shao Xunmei, Zhang Daofan, and Jiang Xiaojian. See Jiang Biwei, *Jiang Biwei nüshi huiyilu, diyi bu: Wo yu Xu Beihong* (Taipei: Huangguan zazhi, 1965), 34-36.
90. Wang Jiyuan, "Tianma hui chouban liujie huazhan de jingguo" (An account of preparing six art exhibitions by the Celestial Horse Society), first published on August 4, 1923, reprinted in Xu Zhihao, *Zhongguo meishu tuanti manlu*, 34-38.
91. Li Feng, "Lü Ou huaren diyici juxing Zhongguo meishu zhanlan dahui zhi shengkuang," 34.
92. See "Beijing yishu dahui: Beijing guoli yishu zhuanmen xuexiao jilai de gaojian" (Beijing Art Convention: A report submitted by the National Beijing Art College), first published on May 7, 1927, reprinted in Zhu Pu, ed., *Xiandai meishujia hualun, zuopin, shengping: Lin Fengmian* (Beijing: Xuelin, 1988), 115-18, esp. 115.
93. In 1978, the filmmaker Bernard Baissat made the documentary *Écoutez Claudot*, which celebrates the life of this artist and outspoken political activist.
94. Wang Daizhi, "Lin Fengmian yishu chengcong de san shiqi" (The three periods in the success of Lin Fengmian's art), in Zhu Yingpeng, "Lin Fengmian de geren zhanlanhui," 205-207.
95. Deng Yizhe, "Cong Lin Fengmian de hua lundao Zhong Xi hua de qubie" (From Lin Fengmian's paintings to the difference between Chinese and Western painting), *Xiandai pinglun* 3, no. 67 (March 20, 1926), 293-96.
96. See "Beijing yishu dahui," 115.
97. Li Puyuan, "Yishu dahui yu yishu yundong" (The Art Convention and the art movement), dated April 13, 1927, in Li Puyuan, *Yishu lunji* (Shanghai: Guanghua shuju, 1930), 176-219.
98. See Zhu Yingpeng, "Zhi Lin Fengmian" (To Lin Fengmian), *Yishujie* 16 (May 7, 1927), 1-2. Zhu Yingpeng first expresses admiration for Lin's efforts and then raises questions about what constitutes a "people's art" and the appropriateness of naming the event an "art convention," which he feels sounds too much like a sales gimmick or entertainment festival.
99. "Beijing yishu dahui," 118.
100. See the entry on André Claudot, *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français* (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1964-1997), 22: 338.
101. For instance, a fortnightly called *Huanzhou* (Oasis), launched in Shanghai in October 1926, had two main sections named "Xiangya zhi ta" (Ivory tower) and "Shizi jietou" (Crossroads). The sections were edited by Ye Lingfeng and Pan Hannian, respectively.
102. Lin Fengmian, "Yishu de yishu yu shehui de yishu" (Art for art's sake and art for society's sake), first published in May 1927, reprinted in *Lin Fengmian sanwen* (Guangzhou: Huacheng, 1999), 14-15.
103. See Deng Yizhe, "Minzhong de yishu: wei Beijing yishu dahui zuo" (People's art: On the occasion of the Beijing Art Convention), *Xiandai pinglun* 6, no. 131 (June 11, 1927), 527-30.



104. Lin Fengmian, "Zhi quanguo yishujie shu," in Zheng Chao, ed., *Xihu lun yi: Lin Fengmian jiqi tongshi yishu wenji* (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan, 1999), 1: 1-20.
105. See Cai Yuanpei, "Chuangban guoli yishu daxue zhi ti'an" (Proposal for establishing the national art university), *Daxueyuan gongbao* 2 (February 1928), reprinted in CYPQJ, 5:179-82. In 1924, a group of Shanghai-based artists and art educators, including Chen Baoyi and Zhou Qin hao, selected West Lake as the ideal place for a proposed Zhejiang Art College; see *Yishu pinglun* 60 (June 16, 1924), 7.
106. Lin Wenzheng, "Shoudu meishu zhanlan hui zhi yiyi" (The significance of the *Capital Fine Arts Exhibition*), in Zheng Chao, *Xihu lun yi*, 2: 461-64. The exhibition was covered in the "Jiaoyu xinwen" (Education news) section of *Shun Pao*, January 5, 1928.
107. Lin Wenzheng, "Wei Xihui yiyuan gongxian yidian yijian" (Some suggestions for the West Lake art academy), *Modeng* (Modern) 3, supplement to *Zhongyang ribao*, February 13, 1928, 1-2.
108. Lin Wenzheng, "Yishu yundong" (Art movement), *Yishu yundong* (Art movement) 1, supplement to *Zhongyang ribao*, February 19, 1928, 1-2.
109. See Lin Wenzheng, "Yishu yundong," parts II and III, *Yishu yundong* 2 and 3, supplement to *Zhongyang ribao*, February 26 and March 5, 1928, 1-2 and 1-4, respectively.
110. See Liu Haisu, "Huiyi Cai Yuanpei," 170.
111. Li Jinfa, "Lin Fengmian he wo" (Lin Fengmian and I), *Zuguo zhoukan* 15, no. 11 (September 10, 1965), 16-19.
112. Sun Fuxi, "Yi Xihu fengxian Lin Fengmian xiansheng" (West Lake as an offering to Mr. Lin Fengmian), *Yishu yundong* 4, supplement to *Zhongyang ribao*, March 12, 1928, 1-2. The same essay also appeared in *Gongxian* 2, no. 3 (March 25, 1928), 47-49.
113. See "Yishu yundong she jianzhang" (Brief charter of the Art Movement Society), written by Lin Wenzheng and published in *Yaboluo* 8 (February 1929), reprinted in Zheng Chao, *Xihu lun yi*, 1: 29-31. See also an accompanying essay by Lin Wenzheng, "Yishu yundong she xuanyan" (Manifesto of the Art Movement Society), reprinted in *ibid.*, 26-28.
114. For a series of contemporary reports, see the "Education News" section of *Shun Pao* on April 2, 3, 5, and 9, 1928. According to a detailed account published on April 5, Jiang Menglin (Chiang Monglin), president of Zhejiang University (which had made land available to the National Art Academy), was very concerned about the situation. He sent in negotiators and also called on Lin Fengmian "to offer concrete and earnest admonition and instructions." Incidentally, the students at the National Art Academy had the support and guidance of the Provincial Student Union, which had been approved by the Nationalist government.
115. Cai Yuanpei, "Xuexiao shi wei yanjiu xueshu er she: zai Xihu guoli yishuyuan kaixueshi yanshuoci" (The academy is created for scholarly research: Speech at the opening ceremony of the West Lake National Art Academy), recorded by Liu Kaiqu, first published on April 16, 1928, reprinted in CYPQJ, 5: 218-21.
116. See Lin Fengmian, "Tuhu naihe shi buxing de" (It does not help to whine), first published on October 16, 1928, reprinted in Zheng Chao, *Xihu lun yi*, 1: 57-60. Lin was evidently referring to Liu Haisu here (though Liu was in fact seventeen when he established a school), thus voicing a persistent disdain among foreign-trained artists for the founder of the Shanghai Meizhuan.
117. Lin Fengmian, "Women yao zhuyi" (We need to be aware), *Yaboluo* 1 (October 1, 1928), reprinted in Zheng Chao, *Xihu lun yi*, 1: 50-56.
118. Lin Fengmian, "Tuhu naihe shi buxing de," 59-60.

## CHAPTER 2: ART THEORY AS PASSIONATE DISCOURSE ON SUBJECTIVITY

1. "Nanguo yishu xueyuan chuanglei xuanyan," *Shenbao* (*Shun Pao*), January 30, 1928, 5.
2. See *Zhongyang ribao*, February 9, 1928, fol. 1, 1.
3. See the February 5 and 15 entries in Chen Mingzhong's diary, reproduced in Tian Han, "Women

de ziji pipan" (Our self-critique), *Nanguo yuekan* (Southern monthly) 2, no. 1 (April 1930), 84-85. The entire essay is reprinted in *Tian Han wenji* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1983), 14: 240-353.

4. Tian Han, letter to Chen Zhenghong (Chen Baichen) and Chen Mingzhong, quoted in Zhang Xianghua, *Tian Han nianpu* (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1992), 103.

5. See Chen Baichen's memoir "Shaonian xing" (Youthful journey), first published in 1986, reprinted in *Chen Baichen wenji* (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi, 1997), esp. 6: 287-94. Chen provides a vivid account of student life and morale at the Southern Art Institute.

6. See Chen Mingzhong's diary, quoted in Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 88. According to the diary, the opening ceremony took place on February 24. (Due to misprints, both the original version of Tian Han's "Women de ziji pipan" and its reprint in *Tian Han wenji* give the date as March 24.) The correct date, however, is February 26, the day an announcement about the opening ceremony appeared in *Shun Pao*. The announcement makes clear that classes started on February 24, but the official ceremony was held at 1:00 P.M. on February 26.

7. See Shen Qiyu, "Yishu yundong de genben gainian" (The fundamental concepts of an art movement), *Chuangzao yuekan* 2, no. 3 (October 10, 1928), 1-7.

8. According to Kotani Ichiro, Tian Han did not enter the Tokyo Superior Normal College until April 1920 and was withdrawn from the school registry in February 1923. See his "Tian Han zai Riben" (Tian Han in Japan), in Kotani Ichiro and Liu Ping, eds., *Tian Han zai Riben* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1997), 466-69. See also Tian Han, "Yingshi zhuihuai lu" (Reminiscences of my experiences with cinema), in *Tian Han quanji* (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi, 2000), 18: 161-227.

9. See Tian Han, "Chuangzao jingyan tan" (On my experiences in writing), quoted in Zhang Xianghua, *Tian Han nianpu*, 26. In September 1918, for instance, he went to see Matsui Sumako perform in adaptations of *Die versunkene Glocke* by Gerhart Hauptmann and *Die Heimat* by Hermann Sudermann. See Tian Han, "Zhi Guo Moruo de xin" (Letter to Guo Moruo), February 18 and March 29, 1920, in Tian Han, Guo Moruo, and Zong Baihua, *Sanye ji* (The three-leaf collection) (Shanghai: Yadong tushuguan, 1920), reprinted in *Tian Han wenji*, 14: 32, 37-38. According to Kotani Ichiro ("Tian Han zai Riben," 462-66), however, what Tian Han saw was an adaptation of St. John Hankin's *The Last of the De Mullins* rather than Sudermann's *Die Heimat*.

10. For a political history of the various study societies among Chinese students and intellectuals during this period, see Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 156-90.

11. See Chen Mingyuan, "Tian Han yu Shaonian Zhongguo xuehui" (Tian Han and the Young China Association), *Xin wenxue shiliao* 28 (1985), quoted in Zhang Xianghua, *Tian Han nianpu*, 49.

12. Tian Han, letter to Guo Moruo, March 29, 1920, in *Sanye ji*, reprinted in *Tian Han* 14: 151. For an extended exposition on neo-romanticism by Tian Han from this period, see his "Xin luo-for an extended exposition on neo-romanticism by Tian Han from this period, see his "Xin luo-man zhuyi ji qita: Fu Huang Rikui xiong yifeng changxin" (Neo-romanticism and others: A long letter in response to Huang Rikui), *Shaonian Zhongguo* (The journal of the Young China Association) 1, no. 12 (April 1920), reprinted in *Tian Han quanji* (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenji, 2000), 14: 157-90.

13. See, for instance, Tian Han, "Shiren yu laodong wenti" (The poet and the question of labor), *Shaonian Zhongguo* 1, nos. 8 and 9 (February and March 1920), reprinted in *Tian Han quanji*, 14: 79-123.

14. Tian Han, "Zhi Guo Moruo de xin" (Letter to Guo Moruo), dated February 9, 1920, in *Tian Han wenji*, 14: 26.

15. Tian Han, "Zhi Guo Moruo de xin" (Letter to Guo Moruo), dated February 29, 1920, in *Tian Han wenji*, 14: 51. Tian Han uses a neologism in English, "Artification," to help define what he means by "making life an artistic experience."

16. See Zhang Xianghua, *Tian Han nianpu*, 41-42, and also Wang Jiquan and Tong Weigang, eds., *Guo Moruo nianpu* (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin, 1983), 1: 96-97. A copy of this photograph was sent to Zong Baihua in Shanghai, who kept it until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Years later, when

17. See Zhang Xianghua, *Tian Han nianpu*, 45–51.

18. See Wang Jiquan and Tong Weigang, *Guo Moruo nianpu*, 1: 98–117.

20. Guo Moruo, "Chuangzao zhe," *Chuangzao* I, no. 1 (May 1, 1922), 1.

22. Guo Moruo explicitly endorsed neo-romanticism as the general orientation of the new journal. See Tao Jingsun, "Ji Chuangzao she" (Memories of the Creation Society), in his *Niugu ji* (Shanghai: Taiping shuju, 1944), reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 2: 775–82.

24. Quoted by Guo Moruo in a letter to Tian Han, dated January 18, 1920; see Guo Moruo, *Chuangzao shi nian*, 63. Tian Han published this letter from Guo Moruo in the same issue of his *Nanyue yuekan* that carried his "Women de ziji pipan" (Our self-critique), in April 1930.

26. In July 1923, for instance, the Society of Unknown Writers would publish its charter in *Qiancao* (Low grass). See Michel Hockx, *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911–1937* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 98–105, for a detailed discussion of this designation and phenomenon.

27. See Guo Moruo, "Hawai guihong" (Letters from overseas), *Chuangzao* 1, no. 1 (May 1, 1922), 10.

28. See "Wenxue yanjiu hui xuanyan," *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 12, no. 1 (January 1921), Supplement, 1.

29. Shen Yanbing, "Wenxue he ren de guanxi ji Zhongguo gulai duiyu wenxuezhe shenfen de wuren" (The relationship between literature and humanity and the traditional Chinese misrecognition of the identity of a literary person), *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 12, no. 1 (January 1921), 8–9.

30. For a recent study of the Literary Research Association and its effort to cordon off a relatively independent literary field, see Hockx, *Questions of Style*, 47–85.

31. See "Gaige xuanyan" (Manifesto on the reforms), *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 12, no. 1 (January 1921), 2-4.

32. See "Wenxue yanjiu hui jianzhang" (Brief constitution of the Literary Research Association), *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 12, no. 1 (January 1921), Supplement, 1-2.

33. See Wang Jiquan and Tong Weigang, *Guo Moruo nianpu*, 1: 115–16. See also Mao Dun's account of this meeting in his memoir, "Fuza er jinzhang de shenghuo, xuexi yu douzheng (xia)" (Complex and intense life, learning, and struggle, part 2), *Xin wenxue shiliao* 5 (November 1979), reprinted in Sun Zhongtian and Zha Guohua, eds., *Mao Dun yanjiu ziliao* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1981), 1: 257.

34. "Wenxue yanjiu hui huiyuan kaolu" (An examined record of the members of the Literary Re-

35. See Cheng Fangwu, "Wenxue yanjiu hui yu Chuangzao she" (The Literary Research Association and the Creation Society), *Chuangzao* 1, no. 4 (February 1923), reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 2: 1043–50.

36. Guo Moruo, "Bianji yutan" (Editorial afterword), *Chuangzao* 1, no. 2 (August 25, 1922), Sec. 3, 21.

38. See (Shen) Yanbing, "Wei xin wenxue yanjiu zhe jin yi jie" (One more suggestion for students of new literature), *Gaizao* (*La rekonstruo*) 3, no. 1 (September 1920), reprinted in *Mao Dun quanji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1989), 18: 38–44.

39. See Chen Duxiu, "Wenxue geming lun" (On literary revolution), *Xin qingnian* 2, no. 6 (February 1917). For a succinct discussion of Chen Duxiu's and Shen Yanbing's promotion of realism, see Marston Anderson, *The Limits of Realism: Chinese Fiction in the Revolutionary Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 30–36.

41. These phrases are also from Cheng Fangwu's essay "Wenxue yanjiu hui yu Chuangzao she," which was written on November 12, 1922, about five months after the publication of the first issue of *Creation*, but was not published until February 1923, in the fourth issue of the journal. According to Cheng Fangwu in a postscript, it had been rejected by the editors of two newspapers, and this had no doubt added to Cheng's resentment.

42. See Mao Dun, "Fuza er jinzhang de shenghuo, xuexi yu douzheng (xia)," 1: 269.

43. Guo Moruo, "Bianji yutan," 21.

44. See Guo Moruo, *Chuangzao shi nian*, 192.

45. See Cheng Fangwu, "Yi nian de huigu" (One year in review), *Chuangzao zhoubao* 52 (May 19, 1924), reprinted in *Cheng Fangwu wenji* (Jinan: Shandong daxue, 1985), 180–85.

46. See Zheng Boqi, "Ershi niandai de yi mian: Guo Moruo xiansheng yu qianqi Chuangzao she" (One aspect of the twenties: Mr. Guo Moruo and the early Creation Society), first published in 1946, reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 2: 749–68.

47. See Guo Moruo, *Chuangzao shi nian*, 201.

48. Cheng Fangwu, "Shi zhe fangyuzhan" (Defense of poetry), *Chuangzao zhoubao* 1 (May 1923), reprinted in *Cheng Fangwu wenji*, 75.

49. Cheng Fangwu, "Xin wenxue zhi shiming" (The mission of new literature), *Chuangzao zhoubao* 2 (May 1923), reprinted in *Cheng Fangwu wenji*, 90–91. English translation by Nicholas A. Kaldis in Kirk Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 247–54.

50. Cheng Fangwu, "Xieshi zhuyi yu yongsu zhuyi" (Realism and trivialism), *Chungkuo wenku* 5 (June 1923), reprinted in *Cheng Fangwu wenji*, 101–102. The terms *expression* and *representation* appear in English in the original.

51. See Cheng Fangwu, "Dongfang yishu yanjiu hui: chunji xizuo zhanlan hui yinxiang ji" (Chinese Art Research Society: Impressions of its spring exhibition of exercises), *Chuangzao zhoubao* 8 (June 30, 1923), reprinted in *Cheng Fangwu wenji*, 271–75. The term *Moderne Tendenz* appears in German in the original.

52. See Mayching Margaret Kao, "China's Response to the West in Art: 1890-1937" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1972), 86.



53. Guo Moruo, "Ziran yu yishu: duiyu biao xian pai de gonggan" (Nature and art: Sympathy for expressionism), *Chuangzao zhoubao* 16 (August 26, 1923), 1-2.
54. Guo Moruo, "Yishu jia yu geming jia" (The artist and the revolutionary), *Chuangzao zhoubao* 18 (September 9, 1923), 2.
55. "Zhonghua quanguo yishu xiehui xuanyan" (Manifesto of the All-China Federation of Artists), *Chuangzao zhoubao* 22 (October 7, 1923), 14-16.
56. Guo Moruo, "Yinxiang yu biao xian" (Impression and expression), quoted in LHSNP, 54.
57. Cheng Fangwu, "Yi nian de huigu," 185.
58. See (Zhou) Quanping, "Sadan de gongcheng," *Hongshui* 1 (August 20, 1924), reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 1: 493-95.
59. See Weifa, "Qihei yi tuan" (Pitch black everywhere), *Hongshui* 1, no. 1 (September 1925), in combined volume (1926), 5-9; Tingsheng, "Qihei yi tuan de chubanjie" (The pitch-black field of publication), *Hongshui* 1, no. 3 (October 1925), in combined volume (1926), 70-71; Gu Fengtian, "'Qihei yi tuan' de yingsheng" (Echoes of 'pitch black everywhere'), *Hongshui* 1, no. 4 (November 1925), in combined volume, 106-108.
60. See Rong Mengyuan, ed., *Zhongguo Guomindang lici daibiao dahui ji zhongyang quanhui ziliao* (Beijing: Guangming ribaoshe, 1985), 1: 254.
61. See Jiang Guangchi (Jiang Guangci), "Zixu" (Preface by the author), in his *Xinmeng* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1925), 1.
62. Shen Yanbing, "Lun wuchan jieji yishu," *Wenxue zhoubao* 172, 173, 175, and 196 (May 10, 17, and 31, and October 4, 1925). See Marián Gálík, *Mao Tun and Modern Chinese Literary Criticism* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1969), 90-91.
63. For his own account of the background to and source material for this important article, see Mao Dun, "Wusa yundong yu Shangwu yinshuguan bagong" (The May Thirtieth Movement and the strike at the Commercial Press), in Sun Zhongtian and Zha Guohua, *Mao Dun yanjiu ziliao*, 1: 335-40.
64. Guo Moruo, *Chuangzao shi nian xu* (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1938), 193.
65. See Mao Dun, "Zhongshan jian shijian qianhou" (Before and after the Sun Yat-sen battleship incident), in Sun Zhongtian and Zha Guohua, *Mao Dun yanjiu ziliao*, 1: 343-45.
66. See (Yu) Dafu, "Juantou yu" (Opening words), *Chuangzao yuekan* 1, no. 1 (March 16, 1926), 1.
67. Guo Moruo, "Gemeng yu wenxue," *Chuangzao yuekan* 1, no. 3 (May 16, 1926), reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 1: 129. According to Guo Moruo, the term *biao tongqing* (translated as "to concur with" here) means "to have the same idea and desire" and corresponds to the English phrase "to coincide" rather than "to have sympathy"; see his *Chuangzao shi nian xu*, 170.
68. He Wei, "Geren zhuyi yishu de mianwang," *Chuangzao yuekan* 1, no. 3 (May 16, 1926), reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 1: 135-38.
69. Guo Moruo, *Chuangzao shi nian xu*, 204.
70. See Mao Dun, "Chuangzuo shengya de kaishi" (The beginning of my writing career), in Sun Zhongtian and Zha Guohua, *Mao Dun yanjiu ziliao*, 1: 384-86.
71. See Guo Moruo, "Tuoli Jiang Jieshi yihou" (After parting ways with Chiang Kai-shek), quoted in Wang Jiquan and Tong Weigang, *Guo Moruo nianpu*, 219.
72. Guo Moruo, "Piping yu meng" (Criticism and dream), in his *Wenyi lunji* (Shanghai: Guanghua shuju, 1925), 182.
73. See Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 34-35.
74. See Kotani Ichiro, "Tian Han zai Riben," 410.
75. See "Tian Han yu tong shidai Riben zuojia jiaoliu dashi ji" (Major events in Tian Han's exchange with contemporary Japanese writers), in Kotani Ichiro and Liu Ping, *Tian Han zai Riben*, 454-55.
76. See Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 49-50.
77. See Muramatsu Shōfū, "Sōnin ron" (On literary personalities), first published in August 1927, in Kotani Ichiro and Liu Ping, *Tian Han zai Riben*, 240-45.

78. See Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 51. On July 15, 1927, the Central Committee of the Nationalist Party (Wuhan) met and decided to purge Communists from the party.

79. For an informative study of the myth and reality of democratic self-governance at Shanghai University, see Wen-hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1919-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1990), 129-65.

80. See Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 52.

81. Ibid., 81.

82. See Chen Baichen, "Wei zaocheng de meng: dianying 'Duandi yuying' paishe sanji" (An unrealized dream: Loose notes on the making of the film *Broken flute and trailing sound*), *Dianying yishu* 100 (November 1980), 49-51. In his "Women de ziji pipan," Tian Han implied that the film was finished, 52.

83. See Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 79. The three Japanese essays appeared in *Kaizō* from October through December 1929: Aono Suekichi, "Tokyo teikoku daigaku ron" (On Tokyo Imperial University), *Kaizō* 11, no. 10 (October 1929), 38-46; Ōya Sōichi, "Waseda daigaku ron" (On Waseda University), *Kaizō* 11, no. 11 (November 1929), 28-35; and Ishihama Tomoyuki, "Keio gijuku ron" (On the Keio gijuku), *Kaizō* 11, no. 12 (December 1929), 80-91.

84. See the April 4 entry in Chen Mingzhong's diary, quoted in Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 89-90. See also Chen Baichen's more elaborate account in his "Shaonian xing," 296-300.

85. See Jiang Biwei, *Jiang Biwei nüshi huiyilu, diyi bu: Wo yu Xu Beihong* (Taipei: Huangguan zazhi, 1965), 62-63.

86. Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 144-45.

87. A notable exception is Chang Shuhong's essay "Zhongguo xin yishu yundong guoqu de cuowu yu jinhou de zhanwang" (The past mistakes of the new art movement in China and its future prospects), dated 1933, *Yifeng* 2, no. 8 (August 1934), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, eds., *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua, 1997), 1: 320-37.

88. See Wang Jiquan and Tong Weigang, *Guo Moruo nianpu*, 1: 230.

89. Mai Ke Ang (Guo Moruo), "Yingxiong shu," *Chuangzao yuekan* 1, no. 8 (January 1928), 1-6.

90. Yu Dafu announced that he would no longer have anything to do with the Creation Society in a notice published in *Shun Pao* on August 15, 1927. See Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 2: 1065.

91. *Bungei sensen* 1, no. 1 (June 1924), quoted in Tatsuo Arima, *The Failure of Freedom: A Portrait of Modern Japanese Intellectuals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 186.

92. For an account of the meeting, see Komaki Ōmi and Satomura Kinzō, "Seiten hakujitsu no kuni e" (To the blue-sky and white-sun country), *Bungei sensen* 4, no. 6 (June 1927), 38-46.

93. See Yu Dafu, *Riji jiuzhong* (Nine diaries), first published in 1927, reprinted in Yu Dafu *riji*, ed. Ding Yanzhao (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu), 1998.

94. For an account of Fukumotoism and its role in advancing the position of intellectuals within the Marxist movement in Japan, see Tatsuo Arima, *The Failure of Freedom*, 187-88.

95. The statement was followed by an outline of the alliance's program, drafted by Aono Suekichi and Taguchi Kenichi, in which they offered a historical review of the development of the proletarian art movement in Japan and identified the alliance's objective as the establishment and consolidation of "bourgeois democracy." See "Shinshutai no kakuritsu to Bungei sensen" (The establishment of a new subject and *Literary Front*), *Bungei sensen* 4, no. 7 (July 1927), 7-23.

96. See Aono Suekichi, "Geijutsu undō ni arawareta shūha teki bunretsu shugi no shoshō" (Different forms of sectarian separatism in the current art movement), *Bungei sensen* 5, no. 1 (January 1928), 134-49.

97. See "Chuangzao yuekan de zimei zazhi, Wenhua pipan yuekan chubao yugao" (A sister magazine of the *Creation Monthly*: Advance notice on the publication of *Cultural Critique*), *Chuangzao yuekan* 1, no. 8 (January 1928), second edition, reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao* 1: 539.

98. See Zheng Boqi, "Chuangzao she houqi de geming wenxue huodong" (The late Creation Society's activities in revolutionary literature), first published in 1962, reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 2: 869-93.
99. See (Jiang) Guangci, "Juantou yu" (Opening remarks), *Taiyang yuekan* 1 (January 1928), unpaginated.
100. Jiang Guangci, "Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue yu shehui shenghuo," *Taiyang yuekan* 1 (January 1928), 1-2 (nonconsecutive pagination).
101. See Cheng Fangwu, "Cong wenxue geming dao geming wenxue" (From the literary revolution to a revolutionary literature), *Chuangzao yuekan* 1, no. 9 (February 1, 1928), reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 1: 164-70. English translation by Michael Gotz in Denton, *Modern Chinese Literary Thought*, 270-75.
102. Jiang Guangci, "Guanyu geming wenxue" (On revolutionary literature), *Taiyang yuekan* 2 (February 1928), 13.
103. See Cheng Fangwu, "Wenhua pipang zhuci" (Congratulatory words for *Cultural Critique*), *Wenhua pipan* 1 (January 1928), 2.
104. Feng Naichao, "Yishu yu shehui shenghuo," *Wenhua pipan* 1 (January 15, 1928), 7.
105. Ibid., 5.
106. Feng Naichao, "Geming wenxue lunzheng, Lu Xun, Zuoyi zuojia lianmeng: Wo de yixie huiyi" (The debate on revolutionary literature, Lu Xun, and the League of Left-Wing Writers: Some of my recollections), *Xin wenxue shiliao* 32 (Fall 1986), 22.
107. See Lenin, "Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution," in V. I. Lenin, *On Literature and Art* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967), 29-31. Lenin's essay was translated in its entirety and published in *Chuangzao yuekan* 2, no. 3 (October 10, 1928), 78-87. (Lenin's name is given as Yilizhi [Ilyich] and the translator's name as Jiasheng.)
108. Feng Naichao, "Yishu yu shehui shenghuo," 12. The term *Tempo* appears in English in the original.
109. As Marián Gálík points out, Feng Naichao's article "constituted the foundation on which stood the rough set-up of the theory of art and literature of the young members of the Creation Society." Gálík, *The Genesis of Modern Chinese Literary Criticism (1917-1930)* (London: Curzon Press, 1980), 310.
110. See Song Binyu and Zhang Aohui, "Cheng Fangwu yu Chuangzao she" (Cheng Fangwu and the Creation Society), *Xin wenxue shiliao* 22 (1985), 132-33.
111. Li Chuli, "Zenyang di jianshe geming wenxue" (How to construct a revolutionary literature), *Wenhua pipan* 2 (February 15, 1928), 17.
112. "Bianji zaji" (Editorial miscellany), *Wenhua pipan* 2 (February 15, 1928), 136.
113. Guo Moruo, for instance, would publish "Liushengji de huiyin: Wenyi qingnian yingqu de taidu de kaochao" (Reverberations of a phonograph: An examination of what position young people in literature and art ought to adopt) in the third issue of *Wenhua pipan* (March 15, 1928) as a reply to Li Chuli. Qian Xingcun, too, wrote an open letter to dispute Li Chuli's account of the history of the revolutionary literature debate and to correct the latter's misreading of Jiang Guangci; see Qian Xingcun, "Guanyu 'Zhongguo xiandai wenxue'" (About "modern Chinese literature"), *Taiyang yuekan* 3 (March 1, 1928), 1-6 (nonconsecutive pagination).
114. "Qianyan" (Preface), *Liusha* 1 (March 15, 1928), 1-2. "Simple and Strong" appears in English in the original. The journal was named after a place in Guangdong where Guo Moruo had fled in the wake of the Nanchang uprising. It lasted six issues.
115. See He Dabai, "Wentan de wuyue: wenyi shiping" (The literary field in May: Comments on current literature and art), *Chuangzao yuekan* 2, no. 1 (August 10, 1928), 107.
116. See the back cover of *Chuangzao yuekan* 1, no. 12 (July 10, 1928).
117. Wang Duqing, "Juantou yu" (Opening words), *Chuangzao yuekan* 2, no. 1 (August 10, 1928), 1-2.
118. Feng Naichao, "Zenyang de kefu yishu de weiji," *Chuangzao yuekan* 2, no. 2 (September 10, 1928), 1.

119. "Bianji houji" (Editorial postscript), *Chuangzao yuekan* 2, no. 1 (August 10, 1928), 157.

120. See "Shanghai yishu daxue chedi gaizu xuanyan ji zhao nannü sheng" (Manifesto on a complete reorganization at the Shanghai Art College and recruitment of male and female students), *Shenbao*, February 4, 1928. Among the newly appointed faculty were Tao Jingsun, Zhang Ziping, Feng Naichao, Zheng Boqi, and Guan Liang. Right next to this newspaper ad, however, was a public notice issued by Cheng Fangwu and Wang Duqing, expressing their astonishment at being listed as members of the reform commission at the Shanghai Art College and stating that they never gave their formal consent.

121. See Lou Shiyi, "Huai Naichao" (Remembering Naichao), *Xin wenxue shiliao* 32 (1986), 175-78.

122. Shen Qiyu, "Yishu yundong de genben gainian," 1.

123. Ibid., 6-7.

### CHAPTER 3: THE NEW ART MOVEMENT AND ITS FIELD OF VISION

1. Lu Xun, letter to Wei Congwu, March 15, 1927, in LXQJ, 11: 534.
2. Fang Bi (Shen Yanbing), "Lu Xun lun," *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 18, no. 11 (November 10, 1927), reprinted in *Mao Dun quanji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1984), 19: 133-39.
3. See Lu Xun, diary entry, December 18, 1927, in LXQJ, 14: 684. This fellowship would last until December 1931.
4. See Lu Xun, letter to Li Jiye, November 3, 1927, and his letter to Zhai Yongkun, November 18, 1927, in LXQJ, 11: 590-91, 595-96.
5. Lu Xun, letter to Li Xiaofeng, December 6, 1927, in LXQJ, 11: 599.
6. See (Cheng) Fangwu, "Wancheng women de wenxue geming" (Finish our literary revolution), *Hongshui* (January 16, 1927), reprinted in *Cheng Fangwu wenji* (Ji'nan: Shandong daxue, 1985), 209-14.
7. See Lu Xun, letter to Li Jiye, September 25, 1927, in LXQJ, 11: 581-83.
8. See Lu Xun, letter to Tai Jingnong, February 24, 1928, in LXQJ, 11: 609-10.
9. Qian Xingcun, "Siqile de Ah Q shidai" (An Ah Q period that is dead) and "Guanyu 'Xiandai Zhongguo wenxue' tongxin" (A letter about "Modern Chinese literature"), *Taiyang yuekan* 3 (March 1, 1928), 1-24, 1-6 (nonconsecutive pagination).
10. Lu Xun, "'Zuiyan' zhong de menglong" (Haziness in the "drunken eyes"), *Yusi* 4, no. 11 (March 12, 1928), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 61-66.
11. Lu Xun, "Zai zhonglou shang" (On the bell tower), *Yusi* 4, no. 5 (December 17, 1927), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 29-38.
12. Lu Xun, "Geming wenxue" (Revolutionary literature), *Minzhong xunkan* (People's trimonthly) 5 (October 21, 1927), reprinted in LXQJ, 3: 543-44.
13. Lu Xun, "Wenyi yu geming" (Literature and revolution), *Yusi* 4, no. 16 (April 16, 1928), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 82-83.
14. Lu Xun, "Shanghai wenyi zhi yi pie" (A glimpse at literature and art in Shanghai), lecture presented on July 20, 1931, *Wenyi xinwen* 20 and 21 (July 27 and August 3, 1931), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 291-303. Many years later, Zheng Boqi and Feng Naichao would agree with Lu Xun's critical assessment of the revolutionary literature movement. See Zheng Boqi, "Chuangzao she houqi de geming wenxue huodong" (The late Creation Society's activities in revolutionary literature), *Zhongguo xiandai wenyi ziliao congkan* 2 (August 1962), reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., eds., *Chuangzao she ziliao wenyi ziliao congkan* 2 (August 1962), reprinted in Rao Hongjing et al., eds., *Chuangzao she ziliao* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin, 1985), 2: 869-93, esp. 879; Feng Naichao, "Lu Xun yu Chuangzao she" (Lu Xun and the Creation Society), *Xin wenxue shiliao* 1 (1978), reprinted in Rao Hongjing, *Chuangzao she ziliao*, 2: 902-12, esp. 906.
15. Lu Xun, letter to Zhang Yanqian, May 4, 1928, in LXQJ, 11: 620-21.
16. See Du Quan (Guo Moruo), "Wenyi zhanxian shang de fengjian yunie: piping Lu Xun de 'Wo de taidu qiliang he nianji'" (The feudal dregs on the front of literature and art: A critique of Lu Xun's "My attitude, tolerance, and age"), *Chuangzao yuekan* 2, no. 1 (August 1928), 142-50.



17. See *Gebi* (Gobi) 2 (May 15, 1928), reprinted in Yang Yi et al., *Zhongguo xin wenxue tuzhi* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1996), 1: 231.
18. According to Chu Tu'nian, in the spring of 1928, Lu Xun wrote to Ren Guozhen, the translator and compiler of *Sulian de wenyi lunzhan* (Literary debates in the Soviet Union, published by the Northern Renaissance Press in 1925), and asked for a reading list so that he could be better informed. See LXNP, 3: 81.
19. Lu Xun, "Xuyan" (Preface) to his *Sanxian ji* (The three leisure collection) (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1932), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 6.
20. Lu Xun, letter to Wei Suyuan, July 22, 1928, in LXQJ, 11: 629.
21. See Tang Yuan et al., eds, *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue qikan mulu huibian* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1988), 2: 3680-82.
22. Xu Guangping, "Lu Xun yu Zhongguo muke yundong" (Lu Xun and the woodcut movement in China), *Genyun* (Plowing) (1940), reprinted in *Huiyi Lu Xun de meishu huodong* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1979), 7-9.
23. Lu Xun, "Benliu bianjiao houji, er" (Editorial postscript to *The Current* 2), reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 160-62.
24. Lu Xun, "Wentan de zhanggu" (Anecdotes in the literary field), first published as "Tongxin, qiyi" (Correspondence, 1), *Yusi* 4, no. 34 (August 20, 1928), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 122.
25. The woodcut was reprinted from a collection of poems by Richard Rowley, *County Down Songs, Woodcuts by Lady Mabel Annesley* (London: Duckworth, 1924).
26. Lu Xun, "Jindai muke xuanji xiaoyin" (Brief preface to *Selections of Modern Woodcuts*), *Zhaohua zhokan* 8 (January 24, 1929), reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 319-20.
27. For an informative account, see Helen Merritt, *Modern Japanese Woodblock Prints: The Early Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 109-12.
28. See Wu Mengfei, "'Wusi' yundong qianhou de meishu jiaoyu huiyi pianduan" (Reminiscences of fine arts education before and after the May Fourth Movement), *Meishu yanjiu* 3 (1959), 44. See also Bi Keguan, "Xiandai muke banhua de xianxingzhe Li Shutong he Feng Zikai" (Pioneers in modern woodblock prints: Li Shutong and Feng Zikai), *Meishu shi lun* 48 (Winter 1993), 17-19.
29. See Merritt, *Modern Japanese Woodblock Prints*, 113-14.
30. Ibid., 138-39.
31. Lu Xun, "Jindai muke xuanji (1) fuji" (Further notes on *Selections of Modern Woodcuts* [1]), in *Jindai muke xuanji*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Zhaohua she, January 1929), reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 322-24.
32. See Lu Xun, "Fukiya Kōji huaxuan xiaoyin" (Brief preface to *Selected Paintings of Fukiya Kōji*), dated January 24, 1929, reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 325-27.
33. See Lu Xun, "Weile wangque de jinian" (For the sake of forgotten memories), *Xiandai* 2, no. 6 (April 1, 1933), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 482.
34. Lu Xun, "Jindai muke xuanji (er) xiaoyin" (Preface to *Selections of Modern Woodcuts* [2]), in *Jindai muke xuanji*, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Zhaohua she, April 1929), reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 332-33.
35. These were Herbert Furst, *The Modern Woodcut* (London: John Lane, 1924), and Geoffrey Holme, ed., *The Woodcut of Today at Home and Abroad* (London: The Studio Ltd., 1927). See Lu Xun, "Benliu bianjiao houji, shi" (Editorial postscripts to *The Current* 10), dated May 10, 1929, reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 182-85.
36. Lu Xun, "Xin E huaxuan xiaoyin" (Brief preface to *Selected Paintings from New Russia*), dated February 20, 1930, reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 343-46.
37. A similar evolution in terminology took place in Japan. Before *hanga* was widely accepted as the Japanese equivalent to "print," Ishii Hakutei used the term *tōga* (blade picture) in describing Yamamoto Kanae's 1904 print *Fisherman*. Other terms, such as *mokuban* (woodblock) or even *itamono* (plank thing), were also used to refer to woodblock prints. See Merritt, *Modern Japanese Woodblock Prints*, 112-13.
38. Yi'an, "Muke tuhua" (Woodcut pictures), *Yishujie* 6 (February 26, 1927), 11-12.

39. For an account of the proletarian art movement in Japan and its impact on the creative print movement, see Merritt, *Modern Japanese Woodcut Prints*, 144-46, 232-34. See also Gennifer Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde 1905-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 50-54, for an account of Yanase Masamu's development as an artist.
40. Lu Xun, "Weile wangque de jinian," in LXQJ, 4: 482.
41. See "Daxueyuan meishu zhanlanhui qishi" (Notice on the fine arts exhibition by the University Council), *Gongxian* 3, no. 8 (August 15, 1928), back cover. The notice also appeared in subsequent issues of *Gongxian*, until October 25, 1928.
42. See "Jiaoyubu meishu zhanlanhui qishi" (Notice on the fine arts exhibition by the Ministry of Education), *Gongxian* 4, no. 7 (November 5, 1928), back cover. The change of venue from the national capital to Shanghai was not without controversy, and Li Puyuan, who was a member of the preparatory committee, had to publicly defend the choice of the new exhibition site. See Li Puyuan, "Meizhanhui da ren" (A response with regard to the fine arts exhibition), dated December 10, 1928, in his *Yishu lunji* (Shanghai: Guanghai shuju, 1930), 234-244.
43. For a study of the National Products Exposition and its historical context, see Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asian Center, 2003), 246-81.
44. See "Jiaoyubu quanguo meizhanhui zuo kaimu" (National Fine Arts Exhibition by the Ministry of Education opened yesterday), *Shenbao* (*Shun Pao*), April 11, 1929, "Jiaoyu xinwen" (Education news), 11.
45. Michael Sullivan's suggestion (in his *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996], 58) that Cai Yuanpei opened the exhibition is probably based on the preface that Cai wrote for a *National Fine Arts Exhibition* catalogue published in November 1929, half a year after the event itself took place. In that preface, Cai stated that he had been the first to be involved in the creation of the exhibition. See CYPQJ, 5: 336-37.
46. Lu Xun went to see the show with Rou Shi and Xu Guangping. Earlier, Uchiyama Kanzō had introduced Lu Xun to Urugawa Yasuro (pen name of Miyazaki Tatsuchika, also known as Pan Uri), whose painting Yu Dafu had used for the cover of the first issue of *Public Literature*; see LXNP, 3: 135. Urugawa Yasuro taught at the Shanghai Art College in 1927; see Shimada Hidemasa (the artist's son), "Lu Xun guju li de nafa hua" (The painting in Lu Xun's old residence), first published in *Chūgoku tosho* (Chinese books) (May 1999), translated by Zhang Songping, in *Shanghai Lu Xun yanjiu* 11 (2000), 191-96.
47. Li Yuyi, "Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui canguanji (yi)" (Visit to the National Fine Arts Exhibition by the Ministry of Education [1]), *Funiu zazhi* 15, no. 7 (July 1929), Section 1, 2.
48. Lin Fengmian, "Women yao zhuyi" (We need to be aware), *Yaboluo* 1 (October 1, 1928), reprinted in Zheng Chao, ed., *Xihu lun yi: Lin Fengmian jiqi tongshi yishu wenji* (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan, 1999), 1: 50-56.
49. See "Daxueyuan meishu zhanlanhui zuzhi dagang" (Organizing outline for the fine arts exhibition of the University Council), announced on July 14, 1928, *Daxueyuan gongbao* 8 (August 1928), reprinted in Zhang Xian and Zhang Yuan, eds., *Zhongguo jinxiandai yishu jiaoyu fagui huibian, 1840-1949* (Beijing: Kexue jiaoyu, 1997), 180-81.
50. "Di yi ye: Jiaoyubu quanguo meishu zhanlanhui" (First page: The National Fine Arts Exhibition by the Ministry of Education), *Yaboluo* 6 (no publication date), 435.
51. Kaifan, "Quanguo meishu zhanlanhui" (National Fine Arts Exhibition), *Yiban* 8, no. 1 (May 1929), 258-59.
52. The Four Wangs refer to landscape artists Wang Shimi, Wang Jian, Wang Shigu, and Wang Yuanqi of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, whose style was endorsed by the Qing court.
53. Songyao, "Wenrenhua yu guohua xing" (Scholarly paintings and the new style of Chinese paintings), *Funiu zazhi* 15, no. 7 (July 1929), Section 2, 45-47.
54. Chen Xiaodie, "Cong meizhan zuopin ganjue dao xiandai guohua huapai" (My sense of the

schools of modern Chinese painting from the works shown at the fine arts exhibition), *Meizhan huikan* (Journal of the National Fine Arts Exhibition) (May 1929), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, eds., *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua, 1997), 1: 197-99.

55. Songyao, "Xiyang huapai xitong yu meizhan xihua pingshu" (Schools in the tradition of Western painting and a review of Western painting at the fine arts exhibition), *Funü zazhi* 15, no. 7 (July 1929), Section 2, 41-44.

56. See Youlin, "Lin Fengmian geren zhanlanhui" (Lin Fengmian's one-person show), *Gongxian* 2, no. 2 (March 15, 1928), 49-52; and Yu Jianhua, "Lin Fengmian geren zhanlanhui yipie" (A glimpse at Lin Fengmian's one-person show), *Gongxian* 2, no. 3 (March 25, 1928), 53-56.

57. Xu Beihong, "Huo," *Meizhan tekan* 5 (April 22, 1929), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, 1: 200-202.

58. Tian Han included a penetrating analysis of Xu Beihong and his art in his essay "Women de ziji pipan" (Our self-critique), *Nanguo yuekan* (Southern monthly) 2, no. 1 (April 1930), 95-99.

59. Xu Zhimo, "Wo ye 'huo,'" *Meizhan tekan* 5 and 6 (April 22 and 25, 1929), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, 1: 206. The terms *Anarchic* and *an independent artistic vision* appear in English in the original.

60. In an essay he wrote for Liu Haisu's solo show in December 1927, Xu Zhimo observed that the artist had found inspiration in Michelangelo, Auguste Rodin, Paul Cézanne, and Vincent van Gogh on the one hand, and in Zhu Da and Shitao on the other. See Xu Zhimo, "Haisu de hua" (Haisu's painting), *Shanghai huabao* 303 (December 15, 1927), reprinted in *Xu Zhimo quanji bubian*, 3, *sanwen ji* (Hong Kong: Lianhe chubun jituan, 1983), 347-49.

61. Cai Yuanpei, "Meishu piping de xiangduixing," *Meizhan tekan* 7 (April 28, 1929), reprinted in CYPQJ, 5: 311-13.

62. Cai Yuanpei, "Ti Liu Haisu jinzu" (On Recent Works by Liu Haisu), dated August 27, 1926, first published in September 1929, reprinted in CYPQJ, 5: 85.

63. Li Yishi, "Wo bu 'huo'" (I am not "puzzled"), dated April 26, 1929, *Meizhan tekan* 8 (May 1, 1929), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, 1: 215-17.

64. Xu Beihong, "'Huo' zhi bujie" ("Puzzlement" not resolved), dated April 27, 1929, *Meizhan tekan* 9 (May 4, 1929), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, 1: 218. The terms *art plastique* and *forme* appear in French in the original.

65. Xu Beihong, "'Huo' zhi bujie (xu)" ("Puzzlement" not resolved [continuation]), *Meizhan zengkan* (May 1929), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, 1: 223.

66. Ibid., 1: 220.

67. David Der-wei Wang, "In the Name of the Real," in Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith, eds., *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 38.

68. Yang Qingqing, "'Huo' hou xiaoyan" (Brief words after "Puzzled"), *Meizhan tekan* 10 (May 7, 1929), reprinted in Lang Shaojun and Shui Zhongtian, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo meishu wenxuan*, 1: 226-27.

69. See Tian Han, "Women de ziji pipan," 97. No other records of this apparently aborted organization are available.

70. Ibid., 99.

71. Liang Desuo, "Huihua" (Painting), in *Jindai Zhongguo yishu fazhanshi* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1989), 42.

72. "Diyi ye: ba xiwang ji gei yishuguan ba" (First page: Let's put our hope on the art museum), *Yaboluo* 7 (no publication date), 535.

73. See Li Puyuan, "Wo suojian zhi yishu yundongshe" (The Art Movement Society I have seen), in *Guoli yishuyuan yishu yundongshe diyijie zhanlanhui tekan* (Special publication of the first exhibition of the Art Movement Society at the National Art Academy) (Hangzhou, May 25, 1929), reprinted in Zheng Chao, *Xihu lun yi*, 1: 39.

74. See *Liangyou* 38 (August 1929), 34-35, for a collection of photographs of the exhibition.

75. Lin Wenzheng, "Yishu yundongshe xuanyan" (A manifesto of the Art Movement Society), reprinted in Zheng Chao, *Xihu lun yi*, 1: 26-28.

76. See Shuiren (Li Puyuan), "Hewu Yishu yundongshe" (What is the Art Movement Society?), dated May 24, 1929, *Yaboluo* 8 (1929), reprinted in Zheng Chao, *Xihu lun yi*, 1: 43-49. In this statement, written specifically to advertise the event, Li Puyuan found it necessary to explain that even though the Art Movement Society show carried the institutional title of the National Art Academy, the society was willing to welcome all "conscientious artists." "In fact, it is far from contented with the limited corner of the National Art Academy. In the near future, it will shine its beams into the still-glowing West and bring about the most powerful unity among new artists of the world."

77. Cai Yuanpei, "Quanguo meishu zhanlanhui tekan xu" (Preface to the special publication of the National Fine Arts Exhibition), dated October 15, 1929, reprinted in CYPQJ, 5: 336-37.

78. See Chen Guang and Lu Hongji, "Yiba yishe shimo" (The beginning and end of the Eighteen Art Society), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, eds., *Yiba yishe jinian ji* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1981), 3.

79. Ibid., 4.

80. Ji Chundan, "Yiba yishe xizuo zhanlanhui zixu" (Self-introduction to exhibition of exercises by the Eighteen Art Society), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 41.

81. See "Fan Ri fenghuo zhong, Hangzhou yizhuan dangju zhi kurou" (Amidst the storm of resisting Japanese aggression, the policy of self-immolation adopted by the administration at the Hangzhou art college), *Wenyi xinwen* 38 (November 30, 1931), 3.

82. See Chen Yuan, "Yiba yishe yu Lu Xun de guanxi" (The relationship between the Eighteen Art Society and Lu Xun), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 31.

83. For instance, a contemporary reviewer decried the multiple left-wing publications as a "plague." See Chen Jie, "Shehui kexue shuji de wenyi" (The plague of social science publications), *Yishu* (Art), supplement to *Shenbao*, January 8, 1930.

84. Hu Shi, "Women zou natia lu" (Which path should we take?), dated April 13, 1930, published in *Xinyue* 2, no. 10 (December 1930), 1-16.

85. See Gong Jimin and Fang Rennian, *Guo Moruo nianpu* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1982), 1: 259.

86. For a general history of the Zuolian, see Wang-chi Wong, *Politics and Literature in Shanghai: The Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers, 1930-1936* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1991).

87. See Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2000), 98-100.

88. Shangwen, "Lu Xun yu Beixin shuju jue" (Lu Xun's breakup with the Northern Renaissance Press), *Zhenbao* (Truth), August 19, 1929; referred to in Lu Xun, "'Yingyi' yu 'wenxue de jieji'" ("Direct translation" and "the class nature of literature"), *Mengya yuekan* 1, no. 3 (March 1930), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 195-212, 220, n. 52.

89. See Ding Song, "Shanghai zaoqi de xiyanghua meishu jiaoyu" (The early stage of teaching Western painting in Shanghai), *Shanghai difangshi ziliao* 5 (1986), 210.

90. Xu Xingzhi, "Zuoyi meishujia lianmeng chengli qianhou" (Before and after the formation of the League of Left-Wing Artists), dated May 5, 1980, in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, eds., *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian 1931-1981* (Shenyang: Liaoning meishu, 1981), 123.

91. Xu Xingzhi, "Xinxing meishu yundong de renwu," *Yishu*, no. 1 (March 1930), 21-25.

92. Xu Xingzhi, "Zhongguo meishu yundong de zhanwang," *Shalun*, no. 1 (June 1930), 23-30.

93. According to Lu Xun's diary, a student from the China College of Art invited him on February 18, 1930, and he delivered the lecture three days later. He would come back for another lecture in less than three weeks, on March 9. Recollections by attendees of these two talks differ considerably. For instance, in 1959 Xu Xingzhi stated that Lu Xun came to the college in September; see his "Dui Zuoyi meishujia lianmeng de huiyi" (Recollections of the League of Left-Wing Artists), *Meishu yanjiu* 4 (1959), 44-48. In his 1980 revision of the same article, "Zuoyi meishujia lianmeng chengli qianhou," Xu Xingzhi adjusted this date with reference to Lu Xun's diary and the minutes taken by Liu



Ruli, who published notes he had taken thirty-six years before in 1976: "Zai Zhonghua yishu daxue de jiangyan" (Speech at the China College of Art), *Wenjiao ziliao jianbao* (Bulletin on documents for literary education) 47 and 48 (June 1976), reprinted in Zhu Jinshu, ed., *Lu Xun yanjiang ziliao gouchen* (Changsha: Hunan renmin, 1980), 129–32. For the full text of the reconstructed speech, see Zhu Jinshu, ed., *Lu Xun yanjiang ziliao gouchen* (Changsha: Hunan renmin, 1980), 129–32.

94. "Shidai meishushe de xuanyan" (Manifesto of the Epoch Fine Arts Society), *Tuohuangzhe* 1, no. 3 (March 1930), 1134–36. The denunciation of commercialism here was based on Upton Sinclair's critique in *Mammonart*, which had been widely influential in Japan and China since it first appeared in 1925. The first systematic translation into Chinese was done by Yu Dafu and serialized in *Northern Renaissance* from April through August 1928.

95. Xu Xingzhi, "Zhongguo meishu yundong de zhanwang," 30–32. The term *Ideologie* appears in German in the original.

96. Codified as "popularization" versus "elevation," these two seemingly contradictory imperatives were generating extensive discussions within the left-wing cultural movement at the time. The March 1930 number of *Dazhong wenyi* (2, no. 3), for instance, published a collection of essays by Xia Yan, Guo Moruo, Feng Naichao, Lu Xun, and others on the question of "popularization of literature." The discussion would continue in the following issue of the same journal.

97. During this period, Xu Xingzhi translated articles on art theory for two major journals affiliated with the Zuolian. One of these articles was Kurahara Korehito's "Yishu lilun de sansi wenti" (Several issues in art theory), published in *Dazhong wenyi* 2, no. 3 (March 1930); the other was Vladimir Friche's "Yishu shang de jieji douzheng yu jieji tonghua" (Class struggle and class assimilation in art), from the author's study of European art history, published in *Wenyi jiangzuo* 1 (April 1930).

98. There is noticeable inconsistency between Xu Xingzhi's account of this meeting and those by Hu Yichuan and others. Xu Xingzhi believed that he had met Hu Yichuan and other members of the Eighteen Art Society as early as the first winter break of 1930, when Xu and his colleagues organized their first art show at the China College of Art; see Xu Xingzhi, "Zuoyi meishujia lianmeng chengli qianhou," 123. According to Hu Yichuan, Chen Guang, and Lu Hongji, however, Hu Yichuan did not become a member of the reformed Eighteen Art Society until after the shake-up of May 21, 1930; see Hu Yichuan, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe" (Remembering Lu Xun and the Eighteen Art Society), and Chen Guang and Lu Hongji, "Yiba yishe shimo," both in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 21, 4. The meeting between Xu Xingzhi and members of the Eighteen Art Society in Hangzhou should have taken place before the expulsion of Chen Zhuokun, Chen Tiegeng, and other members. This would mean that it was probably sometime in April, before Xu finished his essay "Zhongguo meishu yundong de zhanwang" on April 20, 1930.

99. Xu Xingzhi, "Zuoyi meishujia lianmeng chengli qianhou," 129–30.

100. On June 8, 1931, *Literary and Artistic News* carried a report on a developing student movement on the campus of the Hangzhou National Art Academy that demanded to restore the school's original name and status. See Chunxi, "Tamen yao huifu Guoli yishuyuan de xiaoming" (They want to restore the name of the national art academy), *Wenyi xinwen* 13 (June 8, 1931), 3.

101. The exact date of the first meeting of the Meilian still remains uncertain. Most participants later remembered it taking place sometime in July or August, but other documented events also compelled them to conclude that it occurred before May 24. See Xu Xingzhi, "Zuoyi meishujia lianmeng chengli qianhou," 131. Judging by the sequence of events (such as Lu Xun's visit to an art show by the Epoch Fine Arts Society in July), it appears more likely that the inaugural meeting of the Meilian took place in July, when Hu Yichuan and other representatives from the Hangzhou National Art Academy were in Shanghai. See another account by participant Wu Sihong, "Zhongguo zuoyi meishujia lianmeng lishi jingguo luetan" (Brief discussion of the history of the Chinese League of Left-Wing Artists), *Zhongguo xiandai wenyi ziliao congkan* 4 (1979), 378–87.

102. See Chen Guang and Lu Hongji, "Yiba yishe shimo," 4.

103. See Jiang Feng, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe" (Remembering Lu Xun and the Eighteen Art Society), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 8.

104. See Chen Guang, "Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe xizuo zhanlanhui" (Lu Xun and the Eighteen Art Society exhibition of academic exercises), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 38–40.

105. Wang Zhanfei, "Shei qing Lu Xun xiansheng xie de 'Yiba yishe xizuo zhanlanhui xiaoyin?'" (Who invited Mr. Lu Xun to write his "Brief introduction to the Eighteen Art Society exhibition of academic exercises?"), *Guangzhou meishu xueyuan meishu xuebao* 19 (December 1996), 1.

106. Hu Yichuan, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe," 24.

107. See Hu Dajiang, *Hu Yichuan nianpu: Jianbian 1910–1949* (Chronological biography of Hu Yichuan: Concise version 1910–1949) (unpublished manuscript, 2003), 8–9.

108. See Yu Hai, "Wo yu Wenyi xinwen de yiduan yinyuan" (My relationship with *Literary and Artistic News*), *Zhongguo xiandai wenyi ziliao congkan* 6 (1981), 111–15. In its seventh number (April 27, 1931), *Literary and Artistic News* reported that the Eighteen Art Society was going to hold its first exhibition at the Clubhouse for Ningbo Natives on May 29.

109. For the series of reports in *Literary and Artistic News*, see Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 78–80.

110. See Lu Hongji, "Huai Ji Chundan" (Remembering Ji Chundan), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 75–77. See also Jiang Feng, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe," 8–9, and Chen Guang and Lu Hongji, "Yiba yishe shimo," 5.

111. This was reported in *Literary and Artistic News* 38 (November 30, 1931).

112. Lu Xun, "Yiba yishe xizuo zhanlanhui xiaoyin" (Brief introduction to the Eighteen Art Society exhibition of academic exercises), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 308.

113. This print by Wang Zhanfei has been given at least three other titles in various collections: *The Five Dead*, *In Memory of the Five Dead*, and *In Memory of Rou Shi and Others*.

114. See Yu Hai, "Wo yu Wenyi xinwen de yiduan yinyuan," 113.

115. See "Protest Execution of Chinese Writers," *New York Times*, Monday, November 23, 1931.

116. Yu Hai and Xiaoshi (Li Xiushi), "Zenyang qu kan shijie? Zenyang qu biaoqian shijie?" (How to see the world? How to represent the world?), *Wenyi xinwen* 15 (June 22, 1931), reprinted in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 80–81.

117. See Jiang Feng, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe," 8.

118. At the beginning of February 1931, Lu Xun financed the printing of 250 copies of Meffert's illustrations. In his preface to this volume, dated September 27, 1930, Lu Xun wrote that Meffert was reported to be "the most revolutionary artist in Germany," and that he loved to "engrave and print serial woodblock prints with a revolutionary content." See Lu Xun, "Meifeierde muke Shimintu zhitu xuyan" (Preface to woodcut illustrations of *Cement* by Meffert), reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 362–63. On March 23, 1931, *Literary and Artistic News* published a special report on Lu Xun's reproduction of the *Cement* illustrations to promote its importance to the nascent woodcut movement. By June 1931, however, Lu Xun was rather dismayed that less than twenty copies of the cheap reproduction had been purchased by young people, for whom he had apparently reprinted the selection; see Lu Xun, letter to Cao Jinghua, June 13, 1931, in LXQJ, 12: 47–48.

119. *Wenyi xinwen* 21 (August 3, 1931), reprinted in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 83–84.

120. Uchiyama Kakichi and Nara Kazuo, *Lu Xun yu muke* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1985), 1–4.

121. See Yu Hai, "Huainian Lu Xun xiansheng" (Remembering Mr. Lu Xun), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 16–17; and Jiang Feng, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe," 9. Yu Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 16–17; and Jiang Feng, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe," 9. Yu Hai's account, in "Lishi de jiejian" (The mirror of history), in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, *Zhongguo xinxiang banhua yundong wushi nian*, 140–43, is slightly different.

122. Hu Yichuan would not hear about this event until the following year. Curiously enough, *Literary and Artistic News* 23, August 17, 1931, carried a brief report, presumably written by Yu Hai, about

the reporter's visit to Hangzhou on August 4 and his conversation with Hu Yichuan on the Eighteen Art Society's dedication to a systematic study of woodcuts and oils over the summer.

123. Janice R. MacKinnon and Stephen R. MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley: The Life and Times of an American Radical* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 142. In February 1930, Smedley gave Lu Xun a copy of the German translation of her autobiographical novel *Daughter of Earth* with a dedication: "Presented to Lu Hsü in admiration of his life and work for a new society." According to Lu Xun's diary in 1931, he gave Smedley 100 German marks to send to Kollwitz on April 7 and received, on May 24, twelve prints numbered and signed by the artist; see LXQJ, 14: 874, 879.

124. For a description of Lu Xun's motive in publishing this Kollwitz print in memory of Rou Shi, see Lu Xun, "Xie yu shenye li" (Written at midnight), *Yeying* (Nightingale) 1, no. 3 (May 1936), reprinted in LXQJ, 6: 499–510.

125. See Lu Xun, "Kaisui Kelehuizhi muke 'Xisheng' shuoming" (An explanatory note on Käthe Kollwitz's woodcut "Sacrifice"), *Beidou* 1 (September 20, 1931), reprinted in LXQJ, 8: 312.

126. See *Wenyi xinwen* 27 (September 14, 1931), reprinted in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 84.

127. "Muyanhui jiang chuban xuanji" (The Woodcut Research Society will publish a selection), *Wenyi xinwen* 34 (November 2, 1931), 4.

128. See LXQJ, 13: 520–21.

#### CHAPTER 4: THE MAKING OF THE AVANT-GARDE

The epigraph is from Clare Leighton, *Wood-Engraving and Woodcuts* (London: The Studio Ltd., 1932).

1. For a recent and comprehensive study of the first Shanghai war, see Donald A. Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire: The Shanghai War of 1932* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

2. Xu Guangping, *Xu Guangping yi Lu Xun* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin, 1979), 656.

3. For contemporary accounts in Chinese, see *Shijiulu jun kang Ri zhanshi* (Shanghai: Zhendi xinwen she, April 1932), 1: 25–27; and He Bingsong, "Shangwu shuguan beihui jilüe" (A brief account of the destruction of the Commercial Press), *Dongfang zazhi* 29, no. 4 (October 16, 1932), 3–9. See also Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, 48; and Parks M. Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 43.

4. Lu Xun, "Yinyu ji houji" (Postscript to *The Jade-Attracting Collection*), dated January 20, 1934, reprinted in LXQJ, 7: 413–19.

5. Wen Jize, ed., *Jiuyiba he yierba shiqi kang Ri yundong shi* (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren, 1991), 296–99.

6. For an account of the instigating incident in Shanghai, see Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire*, 11–12. See also Ienaga Saburo, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 65–66.

7. For a brief account of the Wanbaoshan Incident, in which Japanese authorities instigated conflicts between Chinese farmers and Korean immigrants over irrigation issues outside Changchun, Jilin province, and the subsequent anti-Chinese riots across Korea in July 1931, see Coble, *Facing Japan*, 23–25. For a detailed study of the relationship between the mass media and war fever in Japan during this period, see Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 55–114. For a more comprehensive study of the Chinese boycott, see Donald A. Jordan, *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931–1932* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

8. For a brief account of the history of the Nineteenth Route Army and an insightful analysis of Chiang Kai-shek's nonresistance policy, see Coble, *Facing Japan*, 41–42, 27–32.

9. "Zhongguo shijiulu jun di qishiba shi di yibaiwushiliu lü silingbu gao tongbaoshu" (An open letter to the compatriots from the headquarters of the one hundred fifty-sixth regiment, the seventy-

eighth division of the Chinese Nineteenth Route Army), in Chen Linggu and Qiu Dongping, eds., *Xuechao huikan* (Guangzhou: Shijiulu jun, November 15, 1932), 184.

10. These two commentaries, titled "Jinggao guomin" (A respectful notice to the nation) and "Guojia de jundui" (An army of the nation), were penned by the renowned educator Tao Xingzhi.

11. *The Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Sino-Japanese Dispute* (Tokyo: The League of Nations Association of Japan, October 8, 1932), 149.

12. *Shanghai shibian yu baogao wenxue* (Shanghai: Nanqiang shuju, 1932), 4. Most of the stories were collected from *Shishi xinbao* (The China times) and *Da wanbao* (The evening post), with a few coming from *Fenghuo* (Battle fire), *The Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury*, and other publications. For a relevant study of the literary genre and the first Shanghai war, see Charles Laughlin, *Chinese Reportage: The Aesthetics of Historical Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 160–74.

13. See Xia Yan, *Lanxun jiumeng lu* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2000), 147–60.

14. Coble, *Facing Japan*, 44.

15. Xu Yi and Liu Yi, eds., *Song Hu yu Ri zhanshi* (Shanghai: Minzu jiaoyu she, March 1932). This volume covers events up until February 15. According to Wang Zhen, the earliest pictorial related to the first Shanghai war was published on February 29, 1932. Titled *Shanghai zhanshi huakan* (Pictorial of the Shanghai war), it contained dozens of high-quality photographic images. See Wang Zhen, *Shanghai meishu nianbiao* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua, 2005), 314.

16. See the advertisement for *Shanghai kang Ri xuezhanshi* (History of the bloody battle of resistance against Japan in Shanghai), *Xiandai* 1, no. 1 (May 1, 1932), back cover.

17. *The Painting and Calligraphy Exhibition for the Relief of National Crisis*, organized by He Xiangning (1879–1972), took place from December 28, 1931, to January 3, 1932. The exhibition was free, but visitors could make contributions by participating in a lottery to win a work of art on display. The event raised over 22,000 yuan. See Wang Zhen, *Shanghai meishu nianbiao*, 311.

18. *Weilao huakan* (Appreciation of service pictorial) lasted only one issue. See *ibid.*, 314.

19. The two exhibitions by Wang Jiyuan and Zhu Qizhan were immediately covered in *Shun Pao*. They were also reported in the "Yiwen qingbao" (Art and literature information) section of *Xiandai* 1, no. 4 (August 1932), 597.

20. A Ying, "Cong Shanghai shibian shuodao baogao wenxue" (From the Shanghai Incident to reportage), in *Shanghai shibian yu baogao wenxue*, 2.

21. Yun Bongil, the Korean nationalist who detonated the bomb, was later executed by the Japanese. He would be featured as the title hero of a short story by Pan Jie'ong that appeared in *Maodun* (Contradiction) 1, nos. 3 and 4 (December 1932).

22. The gathering was promptly reported by the weekly *Literary and Artistic News* 50 (April 11, 1932). (The journal had switched back to its original format on March 28, after being published as a special report under the title *Battle Fire* from February 4.)

23. See Lou Shiyi, "Shi Zhecun de xin ganjue zhuyi" (The New Sensationism of Shi Zhecun), *Wenyi xinwen* 33 (October 26, 1931), 2. For a detailed study of Shi Zhecun's early fiction, see Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China 1917–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 339–70.

24. For a description of Shi Zhecun's literary associates and editorial experiences before *Modern Age*, see Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 132–34.

25. Only two respectable journals in the field of new literature were active at this time. *Beidou* (The big dipper), the surviving journal of the Zuolian, had published its most recent issue in January and would not resume publication until May 20. *Literature and Art Monthly* was based in Nanjing and, because of its affiliation with the government, had never had much of an impact.

26. Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 132, which includes a description of the popularity of *Modern Age* under Shi Zhecun's editorship. See also Shi Zhecun, "Xiandai zayi" (Random recollections about *Modern Age*), in *Shi Zhecun qishinian wenxuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1996), 222–60.



27. She Zhecun, "Wuxiang an suibi: Huashi Hong Ye" (Random essays from the formless temple: Painting master Hong Ye), *Xiandai* 1, no. 1 (May 1, 1932), 32-34.
28. According to Cai Ruohong's memoir, the tuition for most art schools in the fall of 1930, when he entered the Shanghai Meizhuan, was about forty Chinese yuan a semester. See Cai Ruohong, *Shanghai tingzidian de shidai fengxi* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu, 1999), 14.
29. "Chundi meishu yanjiusuo chengli xuanyan" (Manifesto on the creation of the Spring Field Art Research Institute), first published on May 26, 1932, reprinted in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, eds., *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian 1931-1981* (Shenyang: Liaoning meishu, 1981), 6-7.
30. How this woodcut reached *Modern Age* remains unclear, but Shi Zhecun would later indicate that Ye Lingfeng was responsible for selecting it for publication; see Shi Zhecun, "Bianji zuotan" (Notes from the editor), *Xiandai* 1, no. 3 (July 1, 1932), 474. Claiming to have no expertise in fine arts, Shi Zhecun thanked Ye Lingfeng for his help by acknowledging that Ye Lingfeng had been in charge of the pictorial section of the journal.
31. Besides Hu Yichuan's *Journeying Wheels*, which appeared in the issue of June 15, 1931, *Literary and Artistic News* also published Chen Tiegeng's woodcut *The Moment of Unrest on the Street* on August 10, 1931 (under the artist's first name, Yaotang). A print titled *Onward*, published anonymously on March 28, 1932, as an illustration for an editorial on the significance of the first Shanghai war, was most likely by Jiang Feng. On April 11, 1932, the weekly published Hu Yichuan's cartoonlike print *The True Form of Nonresistance*.
32. According to Shi Zhecun, the total press run of the second issue of *Modern Age* was five thousand copies; see his "Xiandai zayi," 255-57.
33. On the cover of a copy that he made in June 1934, Liu Xian penciled a note saying that the blocks were engraved in 1932, when Lu Xun was preparing an exhibition in France; see BHJC, 2: 494. As we will see, Lu Xun did not start collecting woodblock prints for an exhibition in Paris until fall 1933.
34. Lu Xun, "Jieshao Deguo zuojia banhuazhan" (Introducing the exhibition of prints by German artists), *Wenyi xinwen* 39 (December 7, 1931), reprinted in LXQJ, 8: 322-23.
35. Liqun, "Huainian Jiang Feng tongzhi" (Remembering Comrade Jiang Feng), *Banhua yishu* 9 (1983), reprinted in his *Yeguniang de gushi: Liqun wenxue zuopin xuan* (Changchun: Dongbei shifan daxue, 1987), 284.
36. Jiang Feng, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu Yiba yishe" (Remembering Lu Xun and the Eighteen Art Society), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, eds., *Yiba yishe jinian ji* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1981), 13.
37. Ibid. See also Huang Shanding, "Huiyi xinxing muke yundong ersan shi" (Remembering a few things about the newly rising woodcut movement), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 49-53. These two accounts differ over the number of people arrested.
38. Zhang Wang, "Yi MK muke yanjiuhui" (Remembering the M. K. Woodcut Research Society), in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian*, 199-211, esp. 208. See also Zhang Wang, "Zaitan Lu Xun yu 'MK muke yanjiuhui' de wangshi" (More on the history between Lu Xun and the "M. K. Woodcut Research Society"), dated February 1, 1979, reprinted in *Huiyi Lu Xun de meishu huodong: xubian* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1981), 52-65.
39. Lu Xun, diary entries, October 16 and 23, 1933, in LXQJ, 15: 104-105. Lu Xun purchased six prints from the exhibition for 1.3 yuan.
40. See Chen Yanqiao, "Ji Yesui she" (An account of the Wild Spike Society), in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian*, 215-17, esp. 217.
41. Ye Lingfeng, "Xiaoyin" (Preface) to "Xiandai Zhongguo muke xuan" (Selections from modern Chinese woodcuts), *Xiandai* 3, no. 1 (May 1, 1933), unpaginated. The edition of *Jean Christophe* with illustrations by Masereel was published in Paris in 1925 and 1927.
42. Hu Yichuan, "Huiyi Xia Peng" (Remembering Xia Peng), dated March 1979, in Zheng Chao and Hu Zhonghua, eds., *Ji'nian Xia Peng* (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu yuan, 2001), 36-40.

43. "Xu Beihong qishi" (Public notice by Xu Beihong), *Shenbao* (*Shun Pao*), November 3, 1932.
44. "Liu Haisu qishi" (Public notice by Liu Haisu), *Shenbao*, November 5, 1932.
45. See *Xiao gongxian* (Small contributions), supplement to *Zhonghua ribao* (China daily), November 7, 1932, reprinted in LHSNP, 112.
46. Wang Daocheng, "Shanghai shi zhengfu zhuban Liu Haisu Ouyou zuopin zhanlanhui mulu duhou gan" (My response after reading the catalogue of the Liu Haisu post-European-tour exhibition), *Lunyu* 5 (November 16, 1932), 161.
47. Kaifan, "Guan shizhengfu zhuban Liu Haisu Ouyou zuopin zhanlanhui ji" (An account of visiting the Liu Haisu post-European-tour exhibition sponsored by the municipal government), *Lunyu* 5 (November 16, 1932), 158-60.
48. Ralph Croizier, "Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai: The Juelanshe (Storm Society) and the Fate of Modernism in Republican China," in John Clark, ed., *Modernity in Asian Art* (Sydney: Wild Peony, 1993), 139.
49. "Bianji yutan" (Editorial comments), *Yishu xunkan* 1, no. 4 (October 1, 1932), 19.
50. *Liangyou* 71 (November 1932) and *Liangyou* 72 (December 1932), insert. In addition to color reproductions of *The Riddle of Life* and *Nude* in these two issues, there are also black-and-white images of *Spanish Dance* and *In the Studio*. Pang Xunqin would later recall that the French and English newspapers in Shanghai carried more coverage of his exhibition than did the Chinese press; see Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zou guolai de* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1988), 171-72, 150.
51. Wang Jiyuan, "Juelan duanhe" (Brief congratulations on the Storm Society), *Yishu xunkan* 1, no. 5 (October 11, 1932), 10.
52. See "Juelanshe xuanyan" (Manifesto of the Storm Society), *Yishu xunkan* 1, no. 5 (October 11, 1932), 8.
53. Li Baoquan, "Hongshui fan le" (The flood has broken loose), *Yishu xunkan* 1, no. 5 (October 11, 1932), 9.
54. Fou-Nou En (Fu Lei), "La crise de l'art chinois moderne," *L'art vivant* (September 1931), 467-68. The author's ridiculing of Lin Fengmian was thinly veiled: "From time to time, they also pretended to strive for a new idealism of which they themselves were the initiators and sole disciples. For instance, they called their paintings *Groping in the Dark*, *Anxious Search*, *Among the People*, etc.—more skillful at finding words than demonstrating talent." Fu Lei later translated the article into Chinese and published it as "Xiandai Zhongguo yishu zhi konghuang" (The crisis in modern Chinese art) in *Yishu xunkan* 1, no. 4 (October 1, 1932), 3-5.
55. Once back in Shanghai, Liu Haisu put Fu Lei in charge of the dean's office at the Shanghai Meizhuan and asked him to teach art history and French. As an administrator, the twenty-four-year-old Fu Lei was vigilant about keeping political activism off campus and soon managed to infuriate a group of students from Manchuria by publicly calling them "slaves without a country" in the sensitive period after the Manchurian Incident. See Cai Ruohong, *Shanghai tingzidian de shidai fengxi*, 32-33.
56. This collection of articles was published under the general title "Zhongguo yishu zhi qianlu" (The future of art in China), *Yishu* (January 1933), 1-14.
57. Ralph Croizier, "Post-Impressionists in Pre-War Shanghai," 147-48.
58. Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zou guolai de*, 182, 185.
59. This letter, signed by Song Qingling and Cai Yuanpei, is reproduced in Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Ken Lun, and Zheng Shengtian, eds., *Shanghai Modern: 1919-1945* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 52.
60. For a contemporary review and photographs of artwork in the exhibition, see "Guoli Hangzhou yishu zhuanke xuexiao zhanlan hui teji" (Special feature on the Hangzhou National Art College exhibition), *Wenyi chahua* 8, no. 2 (April 1934), 5-8.
61. Pang Xunqin recalls in his memoir that his mother, worried about his not being gainfully employed after coming back from Paris, secured through family relations a handwritten letter from Cai Yuanpei that would serve as an introduction to Lin Fengmian, dean of the Hangzhou National Art

Academy; however, Pang Xunqin decided not to visit Lin Fengmian after all. See Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zou guolai de*, 151-52.

62. Liqun, "Muling muke yanjiuhui de jingguo" (History of the "Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society"), first published in 1935, revised in 1958, reprinted in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian*, 218-24.

63. "Jiju yaoshuo de hua" (A few necessary words), in *Muling muzhan* (Wooden Bell woodcut exhibition), dated April 1, 1933, reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1145.

64. In 1931, Pang Xunqin agreed to do an oil portrait of a wealthy patron for 200 silver yuan. His *Spanish Dance*, displayed at his solo show in September 1932, was purchased by a well-known restaurant owner for another 200 yuan. See Pang Xunqin, *Jiushi zheyang zou guolai de*, 164, 172.

65. Clare Leighton, "Finale," in her *Wood-Engraving and Woodcuts*, 94-96.

66. See Liqun, "Muling muke yanjiuhui de jingguo," 220.

67. "Xie zai kanqian" (Preface), in *Muling muke ji* (Wooden Bell woodcuts), reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1161. This preface was reportedly authored by Chen Guang. See Yang Zhihua and Shi Boying, "Lu Xun cang xiandai muke zuopin de zuozhe jianjie" (Brief introduction on the artists whose woodcuts were collected by Lu Xun), in BHJC, 5: Appendix, 29.

68. See Wang Zhaomin, "Wo yu Yiba yishe" (The Eighteen Art Society and me), in Wu Bunai and Wang Guanquan, *Yiba yishe jinian ji*, 45.

69. For descriptions of his trip and impressions of Beiping, see Lu Xun's letters to Xu Guangping (e.g., November 15, 23, and 26, 1932), to Xu Shouchang (December 2, 1932), and to Cao Jinghua (December 12, 1932), in LXQJ, 12: 119-20, 126-31.

70. See Lu Xun's diary entries between November 22 and 28, 1932, in LXQJ, 15: 40-41. One of the students who invited Lu Xun to the Beiping Normal University was a Chinese major, Wang Zhizhi; soon after Lu Xun's return to Shanghai, Wang Zhizhi, a member of the Northern League of Left-Wing Writers, would write to solicit contributions to a literary journal that the Northern Zuolian was preparing to launch. See Wang Zhizhi, "Yi 'Beifang Zuolian'" (Remembering the "Northern League of Left-Wing Writers"), dated May 14, 1959, in *Zuolian huiyi lu* (Beijing: Shehui kexue, 1982), 2: 588-99. Also see Lu Xun, letter to Wang Zhizhi, December 21, 1932, in LXQJ, 12: 132-33.

71. For accounts of the Northern Zuolian, see Yang Qianru, "Beifang zuoyi zuojia lianmeng zayi" (Random recollections about the Northern League of Left-Wing Writers), and Chen Beidou, "Huiyi Zhongguo zuoyi zuojia lianmeng Beiping fenmeng de jianku douzheng" (Remembering the arduous struggle of the Beiping branch of the Chinese League of Left-Wing Writers), both in *Zuolian huiyi lu*, 2: 522-33, 538-51.

72. Shoumei, "Guohua geming," *Yishu zhouban* 46 (August 11, 1932), unpaginated.

73. Shiren, "Huihua zhi dangqian de renwu," *Yishu zhouban* 46 (August 11, 1932), unpaginated.

74. Jennifer Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde 1905-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 29.

75. Quoted in Li Yunjing, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin, 1996), 26.

76. "Poti'er diyizao, mukehua zai Ping zhanlan" (For the first time ever, woodcuts exhibited in Beiping), *Beiping chenbao*, April 17, 1933, quoted in Li Yunjing, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi*, 26.

77. For an informative discussion of the reports and reviews published in *Lingwai yi ye* (Another page), supplement to *Yongbao*, see Felicity Lufkin, "From Shanghai to the Nation? The Spread of the New Print Movement, 1931-1936" (paper presented at the conference "Situating Shanghai: Urban Space and Cultural Representation," New York University, April 20-22, 2001).

78. Chu Yangtai, "Muke zhan" (The woodcut exhibition), *Yishu zhouban* 82 (April 20, 1933), unpaginated.

79. See Fang Yin, "Beiping muke zhanlanhui dier ci zhanlan guanguang" (Visit to the second exhibition of the Beiping Woodcut Research Society), *Yongbao* (July 6, 1933), quoted in Li Yunjing, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi*, 27.

80. "Beiping muke yanjiuhui zhengshi chengli" (The Beiping Woodcut Research Society formally

established), *Kexue xinwen* (Science news) (July 22, 1933), quoted in Li Yunjing, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi*, 28. *Science News*, edited by Fang Yin, Duanmu Hongliang, and others, was a news journal published by the Northern Zuolian.

81. "Yishu xiaoxi" (Art news), *Yishu zhouban* 93 (July 6, 1933), unpaginated.

82. Ouyang Wenzheng, "Ping bihua yu muke zhi lianhezhan" (Review of the joint exhibition of a mural and woodcuts), *Yishu zhouban* 93 (July 6, 1933), unpaginated.

83. Among the many art books that Lu Xun purchased in 1930 were nine of Masereel's pictorial narratives, or *Bilder-Romane*, including the titles that the Liangyou Press would reproduce in 1933. See Lu Xun's book acquisition list for 1930, in LXQJ, 14: 857-60.

84. "Lu Xun xu" (Preface by Lu Xun), reprinted in Frans Masereel, *Yige ren de shounan* (Ji'nan: Shandong huabao, 1999), 1-4.

85. "Ye Lingfeng xu" (Preface by Ye Lingfeng), reprinted in Frans Masereel, *Guangming de zhuixiu* (Ji'nan: Shandong huabao, 1999), 1-8.

86. "Yu Dafu xu" (Preface by Yu Dafu), reprinted in Frans Masereel, *Wo de chanhui* (Ji'nan: Shandong huabao, 1999), 6-7.

87. "Zhao Jiabi xu" (Preface by Zhao Jiabi), reprinted in Frans Masereel, *Meiyu zi de gushi* (Ji'nan: Shandong huabao, 1999), 1-4.

88. For a relevant discussion of cosmopolitan Shanghai and a "cosmopolitan leftism," see Leo Oufan Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 307-23.

89. See Langston Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 244-59. In his autobiography, Hughes recalled that he met the elderly Lu Xun at a private gathering, but Lu Xun was publicly censured in late July 1933 by Fu Donghua, an editor of *Literature*, for showing no interest in welcoming a black writer. On July 29, Lu Xun wrote to *Literature*, demanding an apology, and his letter seems to suggest that he had not met the visiting poet. See Lu Xun, "Gei Wenxueshe xin" (Letter to the Literature Society), dated July 29, 1933, *Wenxue* 1, no. 3 (September 1, 1933), reprinted in LXQJ, 4: 550-51. Fu Donghua later apologized publicly.

90. Lu Xun, letter to He Jiajun and Chen Qixia, August 1, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 204-205.

91. In December 1933, for instance, Lu Xun specifically stated in a letter to He Baitao that figures portrayed in woodcuts should have Chinese features so as to let viewers see instantly their Chinese identity and situation. See Lu Xun, letter to He Baitao, December 19, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 294-95.

92. See Lu Xun, letter to Zhao Jiabi, October 8, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 234-35. It is not clear whether the two thousand volumes Lu Xun mentions in this letter refers to two thousand sets or two thousand copies.

93. A similar story line appears in a grimmer and more elaborate pictorial narrative by the same artist, *Maiyan* (Selling salt), of 1935, comprised of thirty-eight frames, as well as in the thirteen-frame *Pingfan de gushi* (An ordinary story) of 1934 by the newcomer Huang Xinbo, then a student at the Shanghai Meizhuan.

94. When he met Lu Xun for the first time, at a woodcut exhibition in October 1933, Liu Xian volunteered to illustrate *Outcry*, the esteemed writer's best-known collection of short stories. Perhaps not entirely certain of the eager young man's talents, Lu Xun recommended that he first try *Wild Grass*, a book of poetic essays, which he likely thought would not pose as many challenges. See Wang Shensi (Liu Xian), letter to Lu Xun, January 6, 1934, in BHJC, 3: 861-63.

95. See Lu Xun, letter to Tang Ke, June 20, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 188-89.

96. See Xu Guangping, "Lu Xun and the Chinese Woodcut Movement," in *Xu Guangping yi Lu Xun*, 277. See also Lu Xun, diary entries, for October 11, 14, and 15, 1933, in LXQJ, 15: 103.

97. Chen Yanqiao, "Wanque bu liao de jiaohui" (Unforgettable teachings), quoted in LXNP, 3: 466. *The Iron Flood* was originally published in 1924.

98. Lu Xun, letter to Wu Bo, December 6, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 290.

99. Lu Xun, letter to He Baitao, April 24, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 395-96.

100. See LXNP, 3: 454-55.



101. See Harold Isaacs, *Re-encounters in China: Notes from a Journey in a Time Capsule* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1985), 21. *China Forum* (*Zhongguo luntan*), a weekly edited by Harold Isaacs, had extensive coverage of the Far Eastern Antiwar Congress. In its October 4, 1933, issue (2, no. 11), it published the keynote speech by Song Qingling, "China's Freedom and the Fight against the War," 2–3; an unsigned report titled "Anti-War Congress Takes Place Despite Kuomintang-Imperialist Ban," 3–4; "Manifesto against Imperialist War in the Far East," 4–6; and excerpts from delegates' reports given during the one-day congress, 7–9. The manifesto ends with a call for "unity of all toilers and soldiers against imperialist attacks on the Soviet Union, against transportation of troops and arms to fight the Soviet Union, against the imperialist invasion of China, against the White Guards, against the Chinese militarists, against Fascism. Unity for the World Revolution!"
102. See Shi Zhecun, "Xiandai zayi," 246–49, for an account of his meeting with Vaillant-Couturier and the impact of his open letter.
103. Lu Xun mentioned that he had seen Mrs. Tan once in a letter to Yao Ke, dated December 5, 1933; see LXQJ, 12: 288. This is the only reference, in Lu Xun's diary and correspondence, to his meeting with her.
104. Lu Xun, letter to Chen Tiegeng, December 4, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 285.
105. See Bai Wei, "Zhongguo muke zai Bali, Mosike zhanchu qianhou" (Before and after the exhibition of Chinese woodcuts in Paris and Moscow), *Meiyuan* (Garden of beauty) (February 1981), reprinted in *Zhongguo banhua nianjian 1982* (Shenyang: Liaoning meishu, 1982), 121–24.
106. Lu Xun, letter to Wu Bo, December 13, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 292–93.
107. See Lu Xun, diary entry, December 16, 1933 (when he received a letter and a roll of woodcuts from Wu Bo), in LXQJ, 15: 113. See also Lu Xun, letter to Wu Bo, December 19, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 294.
108. Lu Xun, letter to Yao Ke, January 5, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 313–16.
109. Pierre Vorms, "Lu Xun et Frans Masereel," in *50 ans de gravures sur bois chinoises 1930–1980* (Paris: Centre de Recherche de l'Université de Paris, 1981), 22–25.
110. *Peintres et graveurs de la Chine révolutionnaire: Catalogue de l'exposition* (Paris: Galerie Billiet-Pierre Vorms, March 14–29, 1934), unpaginated.
111. "Manifeste de la Ligue des Artistes Révolutionnaires de Chine," in *Peintres et graveurs de la Chine révolutionnaire*, unpaginated.
112. For an informative study of Andrée Viollis, see Kimberley J. Healey, "Andrée Viollis in Indochina: The Objective and Picturesque Truth about French Colonialism," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 2003), 19–35.
113. Quoted in Vorms, "Lu Xun et Frans Masereel," 22.
114. These comments are quoted in *ibid.*, 22–23. It is not surprising that Fierens detected Masereel's influence, since the critic was of Belgian descent and had studied art in Brussels.
115. Lu Xun, letter to Chen Yanqiao, June 20, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 462; see also his letter to Wu Bo, June 6, 1934, and his letter to Chen Tiegeng, July 12, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 482–83.
116. Lu Xun, letter to Wu Bo, October 16, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 537.
117. Vorms, "Lu Xun et Frans Masereel," 25.
118. Lu Xun, letter to Chen Yanqiao, April 19, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 390–92.
119. For more information on this exhibition, see Danzker, Ken Lun, and Zheng Shengtian, *Shanghai Modern 1919–1945*, 32.
120. Xu Beihong, "Zai quan Ou xuanchuan Zhongguo meishu zhi jingguo" (The process of promoting Chinese fine arts all over Europe), *Meishu yu shenghuo* 8 (November 1, 1934), reprinted in *Xu Beihong yishu suibi* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1999), 98–108.
121. For an account of the Japanese exhibition and the preparations leading up to it, see Helen Merritt, *Modern Japanese Woodblock Prints: The Early Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 146–48.
122. Xu Beihong, "Zai quan Ou xuanchuan Zhongguo meishu zhi jingguo," 98–108.

123. See LHSNP, 119–20.

124. Xu Beihong, "Guanyu Zhong De meizhan zhi tanhua" (A speech on the Chinese art exhibition in Germany), in *Xu Beihong yishu suibi*, 73–75.

125. Cai Yuanpei, "Bolin Zhongguo meishu zhanlanhui zhanpin zai guonei zhanlan kaimuci" (Opening speech at the domestic opening of the Chinese art exhibition bound for Berlin), *Shishi xinbao*, November 12, 1933, reprinted in CYPQJ, 6: 330–31.

126. Lu Xun, letter to Wu Bo, November 16, 1933, in LXQJ, 12: 274–76.

127. Xu Beihong, "Ji Bali Zhongguo meishu zhanlanhui" (An account of the Paris exhibition of Chinese art), *Shishi xinbao*, November 10–16, 1933; also *Yifeng* 1, no. 11 (November 1, 1933); reprinted in *Xu Beihong yishu suibi*, 82–97.

128. For more information on this exhibition, see Danzker, Ken Lun, and Zheng Shengtian, *Shanghai Modern 1919–1945*, 26–30.

129. William Cohn, "Chinesische Malerei der Gegenwart: Zur Ausstellung in der Akademie der Künste, Berlin" (Contemporary Chinese painting: On the exhibition at the Prussian Academy of the Arts, Berlin), *Ostasiatische Rundschau* 15, no. 6 (1934), 141–43, English translation in Danzker, Ken Lun, and Zheng Shengtian, *Shanghai Modern 1919–1945*, 112–17.

130. See *Aufstellung Chinesische Malerei der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Würfel, 1934), 13–31.

131. For a detailed account of this exhibition, see Shelagh Vainker, "Modern Chinese Painting in London, 1935," in Danzker, Ken Lun, and Zheng Shengtian, *Shanghai Modern 1919–1945*, 118–23.

132. Eight letters from Lu Xun to Chen Yanqiao, dated between April 12 and June 20, 1934, are related to this project and discussion; see LXQJ, 12: 374–77, 383–84, 390–393, 419, 426–27, 462.

133. In his letter to Lu Xun, Chen Tiegeng proudly talked about a pictorial narrative that he had recently finished. Lu Xun was most delighted to learn that there was an order of more than seven hundred sets of the story from the artist's hometown in Guangdong. See Lu Xun, letter to Chen Tiegeng, July 3, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 476.

134. Lu Xun, "Muke jicheng xiaoyin" (Preface to *Progress in Woodcuts*), dated mid-June 1934, reprinted in LXQJ, 6: 47–49. In May 1934, Lu Xun financed the publication of *Yinyu ji* (The jade-attracting collection), a high-quality reproduction of fifty-nine Soviet woodblock prints. Prior to that, he and the editor-cum-collector Zheng Zhenduo had published the popular *Beiping jianpu* (Beiping stationery register), which collected more than three hundred exquisite color prints from traditional stationery.

135. Lu Xun would be even more explicit about this when he replied, again on behalf of the fictive Iron and Wood Art Society, to an intrigued reader's request to meet the artists represented in *Progress in Woodcuts*: "As the woodcut gets no attention from so-called grand masters, its authors enjoy no stable life and are compelled to run about for basic sustenance." See Lu Xun, letter to Shen Zhenhuang, October 24, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 545–46.

136. Lu Xun, "Muke jicheng xiaoyin," 47. After receiving the 120 copies of the publication in October 1934, Lu Xun forwarded two copies to Edgar Snow, whose wife, Helen Foster Snow, had not long before requested assistance in locating contemporary left-wing artists in Shanghai. He sent three more to the Soviet Union, one to the renowned Russian art critic and avid collector of prints Pavel Ettinger, and the other two to the printmakers Alexis Kravchenko and Andrei Goncharov.

## CHAPTER 5: THE AVANT-GARDE AND THE NATIONAL IMAGINARY

The epigraph is from Lu Xun, "Wuming mukeji xu," dated March 14, 1934, reprinted in LXQJ, 8: 365.

1. Lu Xun, "Quanguo muke lianhe zhanlanhui zhuanji xu" (Preface to *Special Collection from the National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*), reprinted in LXQJ, 6: 338–39.
2. See Lu Xun's diary entry on November 7, 1934, in LXQJ, 15: 179.
3. Lu Xun, "Quanguo muke lianhe zhanlanhui zhuanji xu," 339.
4. The earliest expression of interest in organizing a national woodcut exhibition may have occurred

in summer 1933. According to an article published in *Yongbao* on July 22, 1933, a Shanghai woodcut research society had contacted the Beiping Woodcut Research Society to discuss initiating such an exhibition. See Li Yunjing, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin, 1996), 27, n. 2.

5. See "Quanguo muke lianhe zhanlanhui choubiechu zhengji zuopin qishi" (Call for submissions by the preparatory committee of the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*), *Beifang zhi xing* (Northern star), October 30, 1934, quoted in Li Yunjing, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi*, 27.

6. The second batch of about thirty prints, sent on November 3, 1934, had most likely come from the Modern Prints Society in Guangzhou. In his diary, Lu Xun did not specify the content or authorship of this group of prints (see the entry on November 13, 1934, in LXQJ, 15: 180), but they came to him via Lin Shaolun, who was then a student at the Guangzhou Municipal School of Fine Arts and knew Li Hua. Lin knew of Lu Xun's interest in woodcuts through the woodcut artist He Baitao. See Ma Tiji, "Lu Xun he He Baitao" (Lu Xun and He Baitao), in his *Lu Xun he tade tongshidai ren* (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi, 1985), 2: 320-22.

7. See Lu Xun, letter to Jin Zhaoye, December 18, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 609-10.

8. Lu Xun, letter to Li Hua, December 18, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 607-609.

9. See Li Hua, "Muke yundong zai Guangzhou" (The woodcut movement in Guangzhou), *Wenyi huabao* 1, no. 2 (December 15, 1934), 58-59.

10. See "Bianzhe an" (Editor's note), *Wenyi huabao* 1, no. 2 (December 15, 1934), 59.

11. See Lu Xun, "Qiguai (san)" (Amazement [3]), *Zhonghua ribao* (China daily), October 26, 1934, reprinted in LXQJ, 5: 576-77.

12. See Wu Wan, "Ershiwu nian lai Guangzhou huihua yinxian" (Impressions of painting in Guangzhou in the past twenty-five years), *Qingnian yishu* 1 (1937), reprinted in Huang Xiaogen and Wu Jin, eds., *Guangdong xiandai huatan shilu* (Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu, 1990), 151-53. Besides Li Hua and Liang Yijian, the other three core members of the Youth Art Society were Wu Wan (1899-1979), Zhao Shiming, and Wu Qianli.

13. See Li Hua, "Houji" (Postscript), in *Liming* (Dawn) (Guangzhou: Xiandai banhuashe, 1937), unpaginated. See also Zhang Zuoming, *Li Hua zhuan* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1989), 16-17, although the narrative here does not agree with Li Hua's own 1937 account.

14. See Li Hua, "Zixu" (Self-preface), in *Chunjiao xiaojing ji*, Modern Prints Series, no. 12 (Guangzhou: Xiandai banhuashe, 1935), unpaginated. See also his "Wo yu muke" (The woodcut and I), *Muke jie* 3 (June 15, 1936), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1356.

15. See *Shanghai shi nianjian* (Shanghai yearbook) (Shanghai, 1936), Section R, 19. The yearbook listed eight participating woodcut societies, from Beiping, Taiyuan, Xingtai (Hebei), Ji'nan, Shanghai (Unnamed Woodcut Society), Wuhan (Youth Society), Guangzhou, and Hong Kong (Deep Engraving Print Society). It also indicated that individual artists from Qingdao, Nanjing, Wenzhou, Shantou, Tokyo, and Southeast Asia were represented.

16. See Tang Ke, "Diyici quanguo muke lianhe zhanlanhui jishi" (An account of the first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*), dated July 10, 1980, in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, eds., *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian 1931-1981* (Shenyang: Liaoning meishu, 1981), 242-46. See also "Xiandai banhua hui dashi ji" (Major events in the history of the Modern Prints Society), *Muke jie* 4 (July 5, 1936), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1368.

17. In December 1933, Wang Shaoluo had held a solo exhibition in Ji'nan that included seventy oil paintings, twenty or so drawings, and seven woodcuts. See Lao She, "Guanhua ji" (On viewing pictures), *Qingnian jie* 5, no. 2 (February 1934), reprinted in *Lao She quanji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1999), 15: 288-91.

18. See Tang Ke, "Diyici quanguo muke zhanlanhui jishi" (An account of the first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*), *Banhua* 17 (June 1956), 29-30. This earlier account by Tang Ke has a different emphasis than his 1980 version, referred to in note 16 above.

19. See Li Yunjing, *Zhongguo xiandai banhua shi*, 30.

20. See Sun Yurong, "Lu Xun yu Yongbao-dangdai muke" (Lu Xun and *Contemporary Woodcuts* of

*Yongbao*), *Jinwan fukan* (Tonight's supplement), supplement to *Jinwanbao* (Today's evening news), November 19, 2003, 1.

21. See Cao Bai, "Xie zai yongheng de jinian zhong" (Written in eternal memory), dated November 1, 1936, in *Lu Xun xiansheng jinian ji* (Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo, 1937), reprinted in *Huiyi Lu Xun de meishu huodong: xubian* (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1981), 90-105. Cao Bai would soon give up making prints altogether to become a successful writer of reportage. See Charles Laughlin, *Chinese Reportage: The Aesthetics of Historical Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 175-79, for a discussion of his works published in the 1940s.

22. See Tang Ke, "Diyici quanguo muke lianhe zhanlanhui jishi," 244-45.

23. The Life Press started serializing the translation in the first issue of its *World Literature Library* in May 1935. According to Lu Xun's diary, he received the first payment of 52 yuan on May 20, 1935. On July 1, Zheng Zhenduo, editor of the journal, delivered the second issue, together with another 153 yuan. By November of that year, Lu Xun had received 583 yuan altogether, a significant amount for daily expenses.

24. Lu Xun, letter to Chen Yanqiao, March 13, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 77-78.

25. In forwarding a royalty payment to his young friend and protégé Xiao Jun (1907-1988), Lu Xun revealed that prolonged work at his desk had given him a stiff neck. See Lu Xun, letter to Xiao Jun, October 2, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 223-24.

26. Lu Xun, letter to Tang Ke, October 3, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 224-25. Lu Xun quotes phrases from Tang Ke's October 2 letter.

27. See Tang Ke, "Diyici quanguo muke lianhe zhanlanhui jishi," 245. Ye Lingfeng's article, referred to in Tang Ke's essay, has not been located.

28. Lu Xun would eventually hear from and write to Tang Ke again, but not until September 1936, almost a year after the Shanghai exhibition and less than a month before Lu Xun's death. Tang Ke wrote to report belatedly that the exhibition had not gone on to Nanjing as originally planned and that, following Jin Zhaoye's arrest in December 1935 for participating in the student movement against Japanese aggression, the police in Beiping had confiscated all the prints that had been stored at his place. The only remaining document from the first *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition* was the preface written by Lu Xun, published in June 1935 and preserved in the form of two woodblock prints with his handwriting engraved on them. Lu Xun, in his reply, stated that he was grateful for the copy of the preface sent to him by Tang Ke and expressed disconsolation at how the exhibition had ended. He then gladly answered some technical questions about a German text on woodcuts and linocuts that Tang Ke was translating. See Lu Xun, letter to Tang Ke, September 21, 1936, in LXQJ, 13: 428-29.

29. Tang Ke first issued the invitation in a January 11, 1935, letter to Lu Xun. In his reply, on January 18, 1935, Lu Xun was noncommittal, noting that if he was going to write, he would not have "many fresh ideas either." See LXQJ, 13: 22-23. On February 14, Lu Xun wrote to Jin Zhaoye to say that he could not write the preface after all, due to a lack of time and material. He also made it clear that he did not want to make comments without further in-depth study. See LXQJ, 13: 60-61.

30. Lu Xun, letter to Chen Yanqiao, March 13, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 77-78.

31. Lu Xun, letter to Jin Zhaoye, December 18, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 609-10, in which he offers a frank assessment of Jin Zhaoye's work as being at best the exercises of a novice. In a letter dated January 24, 1935 (LXQJ, 13: 30-31), written in response to a letter from Jin Zhaoye of four days before, Lu Xun stated that he would not be as optimistic as Jin was about publishing individual collections without making careful selections.

32. Lu Xun, letter to Jin Zhaoye, February 14, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 60-61.

33. Wen Tao, letter to Lu Xun, November 17, 1935, reprinted in BHJC, 2: 438. Tang Ke, in his 1956 account, also pointed to "rampant commercialism" and bad timing as the reasons for a less than ideal reception of the exhibition in Shanghai. See his "Diyici quanguo muke zhanlanhui jishi," 30.

34. Tang Tao, "Quanguo muke lianhe zhanlanhui yinxian ji" (Impressions of the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*), *Shenbao*, October 17, 1935, "Ziyou tan" (Free chat), 1.



35. A brief report on the exhibition in the "Benbu" (In the city) column of the "Jiaoyu xiaoxi" (Education news) section of *Shun Pao* (October 10, 1935), 17, introduced Jin Zhaoye and Tang Ke as the two main organizers and mentioned that the exhibition had traveled from Beiping through Tianjin, Jí'nan, Wuhan, and Taiyuan. Another report about the exhibition appeared on page 20 of the same section of *Shun Pao* on the same day.
36. "Quanguo muke lianzhan zuihou yiri" (The last day of the *National Joint Woodcut Exhibition*), *Shenbao*, October 20, 1935, 14. A condensed version of the same story appeared in *Shun Pao*, October 20, 1935, 20.
37. See *Shanghai shi nianjian*, Section R, 19.
38. See Xu Beihong, "Zhongguo meishu hui disanci zhanlan" (The third exhibition by the Art Association of China), *Zhongyang ribao*, October 13, 1935, fol. 3, 3.
39. See Kuiyi Shen, "The Lure of the West: Modern Chinese Oil Painting," in Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998), 175–77.
40. "Zhonghua duli meishu xiehui xuanyan" (Manifesto of the Chinese Society of Independent Artists), *Duli meishu* (Independent art) 1 (1935), reprinted in Chen Ying, *Chen Ying meishu wenji* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin, 1995), 207–208.
41. For a detailed account of the Chinese Society of Independent Artists, see Chen Ying, "Zhongguo zaoqi xiandai yishu huodong de qinlizhe Zhao Shou" (Zhao Shou, a direct participant in early modernist art movements in China), in her *Chen Ying meishu wenji*, 197–213.
42. For a comparative narrative of these two groups and the modernist school in twentieth-century Chinese oil painting, see Liu Xin, *Zhongguo youhua bai nian tushi 1840–1949* (Nanning: Guangxi meishu, 1996), 64–74.
43. See Tang Yingwei, "Muke shenghuo shinian" (Ten years of my life as a woodcut artist), in his *Zhongguo xiandai muke shi* (Chongan, Fujian: Zhongguo muke yongpin hezuo gongchang, 1944), 55–56.
44. See Hu Qizao, "Wo chuanguo muke de jingguo" (My experience in making woodcuts), *Muke jie* 3 (June 15, 1936), unpaginated, and "Xiandai banhua hui dashi ji," both reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1355, 1368.
45. See "Xiandai banhua hui dashi ji," in BHJC, 4: 1368.
46. "Juanshou hua" (Opening remarks), *Xiandai banhua* 1 (December 17, 1934), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 1: 3–4. In the statement, the woodcut is said to retain "an essential efficacy in psychological organization." Li Hua would change the phrase to mean "an efficacy in social education" many years later. See his memoir "Huiyi 'Xiandai banhuahui'" (Remembering the Modern Prints Society), *Banhua* (Prints) 5 (1957), reprinted in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian*, 225–34, esp. 227.
47. Lai Shaoqi, "Dai xu" (In place of a preface), dated November 1934, *Zhang Ying mukehua ji* (Woodcuts by Zhang Ying) (Guangzhou, 1934), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 3: 933.
48. See, for instance, the authoritative *Xiandai Zhongguo meishu quanji: Banhua* (Complete fine-art works from modern China: Prints) (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin, 1998), 1: 13.
49. Lu Xun, letter to Lai Shaoqi, January 18, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 25–26.
50. Lu Xun, letter to Zhang Ying, January 18, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 26–27. On the same day, Lu Xun also wrote to Duan Ganqing in the north, recommending figural drawing as basic training.
51. Lu Xun, letter to Li Hua, January 4, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 1–2.
52. Many years later, Li Hua would still fondly recall the many times when he and his colleagues turned his one-room apartment into a crowded and boisterous print shop while making copies of *Modern Prints*. See Li Hua, "Huiyi 'Xiandai banhuahui,'" 238.
53. See Li Hua's untitled postscript to *Xiandai banhua* 11 (September 1, 1935), reprinted in BHJC, 1: 217.
54. Li Hua, "Women de hua" (Our words), *Xiandai banhua* 5 (March 15, 1935), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 1: 90. The term *naïve* appears in English in the original.

55. Lu Xun, letter to Li Hua, March 9, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 76.
56. Lai Shaoqi, "Women de hua" (Our words), *Xiandai banhua* 6 (April 1, 1935), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 1: 110.
57. Tang Yingwei, "Women de hua" (Our words), *Xiandai banhua* 7 (April 15, 1935), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 1: 129.
58. Li Hua reported the accusations by "friends in the north" to Lu Xun in a letter written on May 24, 1935. In his response, Lu Xun said he had also seen the criticisms in some newspaper supplements and summarized the critics' main complaints against *Modern Prints*: too much bourgeois sentimentality and even a dangerous sign of a "fallen consciousness." See Lu Xun, letter to Li Hua, June 16, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 150–52. Tang Yingwei, too, baffled by the criticism, wrote to Lu Xun on June 1 to seek his advice. Lu Xun commented in his reply that "whenever one does something these days, someone else will always wield a grand theory and find fault." See Lu Xun, letter to Tang Yingwei, June 29, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 163–64.
59. Li Hua, "Women de hua" (Our words), *Xiandai banhua* 9 (May 15, 1935), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 1: 165. Between 1930 and 1937, Ryōji Chomei published sixty issues of *White and Black* as a *sōsaku-hanga* magazine for amateur printmakers. See Helen Merritt, *Modern Japanese Woodblock Prints: The Early Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 259, 265–67. See also Helen Merritt and Nanako Yamada, *Guide to Modern Japanese Woodblock Prints: 1900–1975* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 210–11, for a detailed description of the content of the journal.
60. According to Lu Xun, Japanese printmakers were only interested in escaping from society. "As far as their work is concerned, there is nothing to learn in terms of content, except that certain techniques are useful." See Liu Xian, "Houji" (Postscript) to his illustrations for *The True Story of Ah Q* (Shanghai: Wuming muke she, 1935), reprinted in BHJC, 2: 539–45. Liu Xian quotes Lu Xun's comments made in his private letters to the artist. Lu Xun was evidently familiar with *White and Black* and *Print Art*, both published by Ryōji Chomei.
61. Lu Xun, letter to Li Hua, June 16, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 150–52.
62. "Xiandai banhua hui dashi ji," in BHJC, 4: 1369.
63. Altogether, *Modern Prints* published eight contemporary Japanese woodcuts between May 1935 and February 1936. The exchange between the Chinese and Japanese printmakers was discontinued when the movement against Japanese military aggression gathered momentum in Guangzhou in early 1936. Ryōji Chomei wrote an article about the situation, and it was published many years later. See Ryōji Chomei, "Chūgoku geijutsu dantai no kōnichi no genjō" (The current resistance movement against Japan among Chinese art societies), published in *Chūgoku hanga kenkyū* (Studies in Chinese prints) 1 (April 1993), 11–12. This journal was published by the Japan-China Art Research Society. The same inaugural issue also carried an article, in both Japanese (translated by Kazuo Nara) and Chinese by Li Hua, who fondly recalled his friendship with Ryōji. See Li Hua, "Watashi to Ryōji Chomei sensei to kōryū" and "Wo he Liaozhi Zhaoming xiansheng de jiaowang" (The exchange between Mr. Ryōji Chomei and myself), 43–45, 104–105.
64. "Women de hua" (Our words), *Xiandai banhua* 10 (June 15, 1935), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 1: 183–84.
65. "Xiandai banhua hui dashi ji," in BHJC, 4: 1370.
66. He Sijing, "Beijizhuang de minzu xushishi, xuqu, kang-Ri zhi haozhao" (Heroic national epic, prelude, the calling for resisting Japan), first published in both *Zhongshan daxue ribao* (Zhongshan University daily) and *Xin yuzhou* (New universe) on November 22, 1935, reprinted in *Yierjiu yudong zai Guangzhou* (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin, 1994), 271–74.
67. Yang Yiqing, "Lun geming ceyuandi de xuesheng yundong" (On the student movement in the birthplace of the revolution), first published in December 1936, reprinted in *Yierjiu yudong zai Guangzhou*, 289–92.
68. Tang Yingwei, "Fakan de hua" (Remarks on the publication of the journal), *Muke jie* 1 (April 15, 1936), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1309.

69. See Tang Yingwei, "Muke shenghuo shinian," 57–59. In the third issue of *Field of Woodcuts*, Tang Yingwei reported that as a result of his solo exhibition, about one hundred woodblock prints made by five members of the graduating class (including Wang Chaowen) were exhibited at the end of May at the Hangzhou National Art Academy. See "Xiaoxi" (News), *Muke jie* 3 (June 15, 1936), unpaginated, reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1358.
70. See Tang Yingwei, *Zhongguo xiandai muke shi*, 22.
71. The transformation of the Modern Prints Society mirrors what Michel Hockx describes as the difference between a member-oriented literary group and a "public sphere organization." See his *Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911–1937* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 93–98, for a study of the different kinds of organized literary societies in Republican China during the 1920s and 1930s.
72. Lu Xun, letter to Li Hua, April 4, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 104–105.
73. Lu Xun, letter to Tang Yingwei, March 23, 1936, in LXQJ, 13: 335.
74. Lu Xun, letter to Luo Qingzhen, February 26, 1934, in LXQJ, 12: 343–44. See also Lu Xun, letter to Zhang Hui, March 22, 1935, and letter to Li Hua, April 4, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 89, 104–105.
75. Lu Xun, letter to Zheng Yefu, February 17, 1936, in LXQJ, 13: 311.
76. Xu Beihong, "Xu Sulian banhua zhanlanhui" (Preface to the Soviet graphics exhibition), dated December 12, 1935, reprinted in *Xu Beihong yishu wenji* (Taipei: Yishujia, 1987), 1: 321–23.
77. Cai Yuanpei, "Sulian banhua zhanlanhui kaimushi yanshuoci" (Speech given at the opening ceremony of the Soviet graphics exhibition), *Zhong Su wenhua* (Sino-Soviet culture) 1, no. 1 (May 15, 1936), reprinted in CYPQJ, 7: 24–25; Lu Xun, "Ji Sulian banhua zhanlanhui" (On the Soviet graphics exhibition), *Shenbao*, February 24, 1936, reprinted in LXQJ, 6: 481–84.
78. Lu Xun, letter to Ouyang Shan and Cao Ming, March 18, 1936, in LXQJ, 13: 329–30.
79. Lu Xun, letter to Masuda Wataru, June 10, 1935, in LXQJ, 13: 632–34.
80. Zhao Jiabi, "Huiyi Lu Xun yu 'Sulian banhua'ji" (Remembering Lu Xun and *Soviet Graphics*), dated April 1978, in *Huiyi Lu Xun de meishu huodong: xubian*, 115–39.
81. Lu Xun, "'Sulian banhua'ji xu" (Preface to *Soviet Graphics*), in Zhao Jiabi, ed., *Sulian banhua'ji* (Shanghai: Liangyou Press, 1936), reprinted in LXQJ, 6: 593–94.
82. When he eventually came across the pirated version, Lu Xun was outraged and condemned it as proof of how adept some people were at ruining fine arts. See Lu Xun, letter to Cao Bai, August 2, 1936, in LXQJ, 13: 399–400.
83. See the advertisement in *Shun Pao*, May 18, 20, and 21, 1936. For an English translation of the call for submissions, see Sherman Cochran and Andrew C. K. Hsieh, eds., *One Day in China: May 21, 1936* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), Appendix A, 266–67.
84. Mao Dun, "Guanyu bianji de jingguo" (On the editorial process), in *Zhongguo de yi ri* (Shanghai: Life Bookstore, 1936), 1–7. For an English translation, see Sherman and Hsieh, *One Day in China*, Appendix C, 270–76.
85. "Xiandai banhuahui juban zhi Quanguo muke liudong zhanlanhui caozhang" (Draft charter of the *National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition* organized by the Modern Prints Society), *Muke jie* 1 (April 15, 1936), back cover, reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1324.
86. See "Shanghai 'Shidai manhua' zhuban: Quanguo manhua zhanlanhui zhengqiu zuopin" (Organized by *Modern Sketch* of Shanghai: Call for submissions to the national cartoon exhibition), *Shidai manhua* 27 (June 20, 1936), unpaginated.
87. Tang Yingwei, "Qingnian muke zuojia duiyu muke yingyou de renshi" (The understanding that young woodcut artists should have of woodcuts), *Muke jie* 2 (May 15, 1936), reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1326.
88. Li Hua, "Muke zai guonan qizhong de gujia," *Muke jie* 1 (April 15, 1936), reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1310–11.
89. Jiang Xijin, "Guofang yishu yu muke" (Art for national defense and woodcuts), *Muke jie* 3 (June 15, 1936), reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1344. The growing sense of urgency notwithstanding, the first three

issues of *Field of Woodcuts* included reproductions of works by contemporary German woodcut artists Fritz Faiss (1905–1981) and Immanuel Knayer (1896–1962) and devoted considerable space to introducing the French printmaker Valentin le Campion (1894–1955).

90. Lin Fengmian's essay "Lun guofang yishu zhi ke'nengxing" was published in the resurrected journal *Xin shidai* (New epoch) 7, no. 1 (January 1, 1937). See Tang Yuan et al., eds., *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue qikan mulu huibian* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1988), 1: 1287.

91. See Feng Xuefeng, "Youguan yijiusanliu nian Zhou Yang dengren de xingdong yiji Lu Xun tichu 'minzu geming zhanzheng de dazhong wenxue' kouhao de jingguo" (About the action of Zhou Yang and others in 1936 and the process by which Lu Xun raised the slogan "public literature for a national revolutionary war"), *Xin wenxue shiliao* 2 (February 1979), 247–58.

92. It did not take long for Guo Moruo, now a scholar of oracle bones in Tokyo, to decide to side with Zhou Yang and blame Lu Xun for being meddlesome. See Kong Haizhu, "Liangge kouhao lunzheng zhong de Guo Moruo—jiantan liangpian youguan yiwen" (Guo Moruo during the two-slogan debate: Also on two related essays rediscovered), in her *Zuoyi, Shanghai: 1934–1936* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 2003), 238–53.

93. See the editorial postscript to Lu Xun's essay "Lun xianzai women de wenxue yundong" (On our current literary movement), in *Wenxuejie* (The field of literature) 1, no. 2 (July 1936), edited by Zhou Yang, reprinted in LXNP, 4: 356–57.

94. A young member of the Northern Zuolian in Beiping would, for instance, recall many years later being puzzled, along with his comrades, by the two competing slogans and would still see much advantage to "literature for national defense" as a practical and appealing formulation. See Wang Xiyan, "Huiyi Beiping zuojia xiehui ji qita" (Remembering the Beiping writers' association and other matters), dated September 1979, in *Zuolian huiyi lu* (Beijing: Shehui kexue, 1982), 2: 635–49.

95. See Lu Xun's diary entry, June 30, 1936, in LXQJ, 15: 301, and his letter to Cao Jinghua, July 6, 1936, in LXQJ, 13: 391.

96. See LXNP, 4: 362–63.

97. See Lu Xun, "Xie yu shenye li" (Written at midnight), *Yeying* (Nightingale) 1, no. 3 (May 1936), reprinted in LXQJ, 6: 499–510. At the end of August, when he received copies of the collection, Lu Xun asked Uchiyama Kanzō to send a copy and a letter to Mushakoji Saneatsu, who was in Berlin at the time, in the hope that he could forward them to Käthe Kollwitz herself.

98. Some of the money Smedley made available may have come from Song Qingling, who intended it for other purposes. See Janice R. MacKinnon and Stephen R. MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley: The Life and Times of an American Radical* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 168.

99. Lu Xun, letter to Cao Bai, March 21, 1936, in LXQJ, 13: 331–32.

100. See Lu Xun, letter to Mao Dun, April 11, 1936, in LXQJ, 15: 353–54.

101. Lu Xun, letters to Cao Bai, August 2 and 7, 1936, in LXQJ, 15: 399–400, 402–403.

102. Tang Yingwei, "Quanguo muke liudong zhanlan de yiyi" (The significance of the *National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition*), *Muke jie* 4 (July 5, 1936), reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1365.

103. See Li Hua, "Quanguo muke liudong zhanlanhui choubi de jingguo" (Preparation for the *National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition*), *Muke jie* 4 (July 5, 1936), reprinted in BHJC, 4: 1366–67.

104. Tang Yingwei, *Zhongguo xiandai muke shi*, 59.

105. Ibid., 60.

106. See Cao Bai, "Xie zai yongheng de jinian zhong," 90–105; and Chen Yanqiao, "Zuihou yici de huijian: Huiyi Lu Xun xiansheng" (Our last meeting: Remembering Mr. Lu Xun), *Meishu* (Fine arts) (May 1961), reprinted in *Huiyi Lu Xun de meishu huodong: xubian*, 136–40.

107. See, for instance, Tang Tao, "Lu Xun xiansheng bu si" (Mr. Lu Xun does not die), *Shenbao*, October 23, 1936, in which the author describes his disbelief when first told of the news on the afternoon of October 19.

108. See the report "Wuqian yu ren zuori zhanyang Lu Xun yirong" (Over five thousand people paid final respects to Lu Xun yesterday), *Shenbao*, October 21, 1936.



109. See the report "Lu Xun zuori anzang" (Lu Xun laid to rest yesterday), *Shenbao*, October 23, 1936.
110. Yu, "Dao Lu Xun xiansheng," *Shenbao*, October 23, 1936.
111. "Shanghai muke zuozhe xiehui chengli xuanyan" (Manifesto on the formation of the Shanghai Association of Woodcut Makers), *Wenxue* 7, no. 6 (December 1, 1936), reprinted in Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian*, 20-21.
112. Cao Bai, "Lüetan xianzai Zhongguo de huihua" (A brief essay on painting in today's China), *Zhongliu* 1, no. 8 (December 30, 1936), 473-76.
113. See Tang Yingwei, *Zhongguo xiandai muke shi*, 24, 60. Tang Yingwei claims that the exhibition traveled to more than twenty venues in a dozen provinces and major cities.
114. See Li Hua, Li Shusheng, and Ma Ke, *Zhongguo xinxing banhua yundong wushi nian*, 22-23.

## CONCLUSION: THE ORIGINS OF ROAR, CHINA!

1. In January 1927, the journal *Art Field Weekly* carried a long essay introducing Munch and his "frightening art." Beginning with a description and analysis of *The Scream*, the author, Yin Shizhu, wrote that the main tension underlying the image was that between the desperate cry for help of the poor and the relaxed insulation and indifference of the rich. See Yin Shizhu, "Kongbu zhuyi de Mengke" (The terrifying Munch), *Yishujie* 2 (January 29, 1927), 4-12.
2. Lu Xun, "Moluo shili shuo" (On the power of Mara poetry), first published in 1908, reprinted in LXQJ, 1: 63-115. For an English translation by Shu-ying Tsau and Donald Holoch, see Kirk Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 96-109.
3. This account is taken from Lu Xun's autobiographical "Zixu" (Preface) to *Nahan* (Outcry) (Beijing: Xinchao she, 1923), reprinted in LXQJ, 1: 419. For an English translation, see *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun* (New York: Norton, 1977), 1-8.
4. For such a postmodern reading of Lu Xun, see Rey Chow, "Visuality, Modernity, and Primitive Passions," in her *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 1-52.
5. John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 4.
6. For an account of the arrival of sound films in China, see Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 73-74.
7. One of the participants was the cartoonist Cai Ruohong, whom Nie Er pulled away from his easel and into an already crowded dining hall. See Cai Ruohong, *Shanghai tingzajian de shidai fengxi* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu, 1999), 166-73.
8. "But all its prophecy," Tret'iaikov would comment, "consists only in a correct analysis of the astonishing monotony and consistency of the colonial policy of the imperialist countries." See "Author's Note," in *Roar, China: An Episode in Nine Scenes* (New York: International Publishers, 1931), 7-8.
9. According to Steve Nicholson, Terence Gray, the creator and manager of Cambridge's Festival Theatre, was interested in producing *Roar, China!* in 1931 but was not successful because of censorship exercised by the lord chamberlain in cohort with the admiralty. See Nicholson, *British Theatre and the Red Peril: The Portrayal of Communism 1917-1945* (Exeter, England: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 21-25. When a version of the script was subsequently published, the British navy was replaced with the French navy in the play.
10. Ouyang Yuqian, "Xu" (Preface), in *Nuhou ba, Zhongguo!* (Shanghai: Liangyou Press, 1935), 5-8.
11. *Legun* (Mass entertainment) 1, no. 4 (April 1, 1929). See Tang Yuan et al., eds., *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue qikan mulu huibian* (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1988), 1: 951.
12. Tian Han, "Nuhoubai, Zhongguo!" (Roar, China!), first published in 1929, reprinted in *Tian Han sanwen ji* (Shanghai: Jindai shudian, 1936), 199-217.

13. See the collection of articles by Ouyang Yuqian, Hu Chunbing, and He Ziheng in *Xiju* 2, no. 2 (October 1930).

14. This last production would be recalled many years later by a member in the audience as an intense experience that involved security guards ready to forestall any disruption by plainclothes police. See Du Ai, "Guangzhou Zuolian zayi" (Miscellaneous memories about the Guangzhou Zuolian), dated May 12, 1980, in *Zuolian huiyi lu* (Beijing: Shehui kexue, 1982), 2: 660-68.

15. On July 27, 1931, *Literary and Artistic News* in Shanghai reported that a student group at the Central University in Nanjing was planning to perform *Roar, China!*; see "Housheng zi Nanjing jiaochu" (The roaring from Nanjing), *Wenyi xinwen* 20 (July 27, 1931), 5. Just over two months later, at the beginning of October 1931, a literary monthly reported that the Undertaking Society in Nanjing had staged the play; see "Wentan xiaoxi: Kaizhan she gongyan Nuhouba Zhongguo" (Literary news: The Undertaking Society publicly produced *Roar, China!*), *Xin shidai* 1, no. 3 (October 1, 1931), referred to in Tang Yuan et al., eds., *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue qikan mulu huibian*, 1: 1267. For a recent study of the Undertaking Society, which endorsed the Nationalist Literature Movement sponsored by the Nanjing government, see Ni Wei, "Minzu" xiangxiang yu guojia tongzhi: 1928-1948 nian Nanjing zhengfu de wenyi zhengce ji wenxue yundong (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu, 2003), 76-79.

Then, in January 1932, *Literary and Artistic News* announced that the Big Way Drama Society in Shanghai was actively preparing to put on Tret'iaikov's play: "It is expected that the first outcry from the theater in 1932 will be issued by the Big Way onstage." One of its reporters even attended a press conference called by the drama society and relayed encouraging remarks by literary figures. Yet this much-anticipated event never took place, and no explanation was ever offered or recorded. See "Nuhouba, Zhongguo!" (Roar, China!) and "Nuhouba, Zhongguo! Zai choubai yanchu zhong" (Production of *Roar, China!* in preparation), *Wenyi xinwen* 43 and 44 (January 3 and 11, 1932), 2 and 3, respectively.

16. "Nuhouba, Zhongguo! Sun Shiye tan (yi, er, san)" (*Roar, China!* Comments by Sun Shiye [1, 2, 3]), *Wenyi xinwen* 4, 5, and 6 (April 6, 13, and 20, 1931), 2, 2, and 2, respectively.

17. Lin Ruijing, "Nuhouba, Zhongguo! Jihe zai fandui diguo zhuyi de qizhi xia" (Roar, China! Unite under the banner of fighting imperialism), *Shizi jietou* 1 (December 11, 1931), 1.

18. Tian Han, "Nuhouba, Zhongguo" (Roar, China), *Chenbao* (Morning post), September 19, 1933, reprinted in *Tian Han quanji* (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi, 2000), 19: 434-35.

19. See Tian Han, "Chuangzuo jingyan tan" (On my experiences in creative writing), dated May 1933, in *Tian Han sanwen ji*, 337.

20. For instance, in October 1933, a spate of journals with different political orientations all published either photographs or reviews of the production: see *Xiandai* 3, no. 6; *Wenxue* 1, no. 4; *Taosheng* 2, no. 41; and *Maodun* 2, no. 2.

21. Feng Zhongtie's *Roar, China!* was published in *Shangwu ribao* (Business daily), May 17, 1937. See Ling Chengwei and Ling Yan, *Sichuan xinxing banhua fazhanshi* (Chengdu: Sichuan meishu, 1992), Appendix 1, 2.

22. See the section "Incredible Shanghai" in Langston Hughes's autobiography *I Wonder as I Wander* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 246-50.

23. During an interview with Chinese writers, editors, and critics on July 13, 1933, Hughes mentioned Tret'iaikov's latest play, *Introduction*, and praised it for being the most successful dramatic production in the Soviet Union at the time. See Wu Shi, "Xiushi zai Zhongguo" (Hughes in China), *Wenxue* 1, no. 2 (August 1, 1933), 254-58.

24. Langston Hughes's "Roar, China!" would also be published in *New Masses* (February 22, 1938). See *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 198-200, 646. I would like to thank Andrew Jones for calling my attention to this important text.

## CHINESE AND JAPANESE NAMES AND EXPRESSIONS

A Ying	阿英	Chen Shuren	陈树人
Ai Qing	艾青	Chen Tiegeng	陈铁耕
Akita Ujaku	秋田雨雀	Chen Yanqiao	陈烟桥
Aono Suekichi	青野季吉	Chen Zhonggang	陈仲纲
Bai Sha	白砂	Chen Zhuokun	陈卓坤
Baixin	白辛	Cheng Fangwu	成仿吾
banhua	版画	Chiang Kai-shek	蒋介石
Baudon	暴动	chuangzuo muke	创作木刻
Beida	北大	Dai Wangshu	戴望舒
biaoxian	表现	dazhong yishu	大众艺术
biaoxian zhuyi	表现主义	Deng Yizhe	邓以哲
bijutsu	美術	Ding Ling	丁玲
Bunten	文展	Ding Yanyong	丁衍庸
Cai Tingkai	蔡廷锴	Duan Ganqing	段干青
Cai Weilian	蔡威廉	Feng Naichao	冯乃超
Cai Yuanpei	蔡元培	Feng Xuefeng	冯雪峰
Cao Bai	曹白	Feng Zhongtie	鄧中铁
Chen Baoyi	陈抱一	Feng Zikai	丰子恺
Chen Duxiu	陈独秀	Fu Lei	傅雷
Chen Guang	陈光	Fukiya Kōji	落谷虹児
Chen Hengke	陈衡恪	Fukumoto Kazuo	福本和夫
Chen Jitang	陈济棠	fukusei-hanga	複製版画
Chen Kemo	陈可默	Fukuzawa Yukichi	福沢諭吉
Chen Puzhi	陈普之	Gao Jianfu	高剑父
Chen Shaoshui	陈勺水	Gao Qifeng	高奇峰



geijutsu 芸術  
gongyi 工艺  
Gonnon 工农  
Guan Liang 关良  
Guo Moruo 郭沫若  
guohua 国画  
hanga 版画  
Hao Lichun 郝丽春  
Hayashi Fusao 林房雄  
He Baitao 何白涛  
He Sijing 何思敬  
He Wei 何畏  
Hong Shen 洪深  
Hong Ye 洪野  
Hu Gentian 胡根天  
Hu Man 胡蛮  
Hu Qizao 胡其藻  
Hu Shi 胡适  
Hu Yichuan 胡一川  
hua 画  
Huang Binhong 黄宾虹  
Huang Shanding 黄山定  
Huang Xinbo 黄新波  
Ishii Hakutei 石井柏亭  
Itagaki Takaho 板垣鹰穗  
Ji Chundan 季春丹  
Jiang Danshu 姜丹书  
Jiang Feng 江丰  
Jiang Guangci 蒋光慈  
Jiang Guangnai 蒋光鼐  
Jiang Menglin 蒋梦麟  
Jiang Xiaojian 江小鹣  
Jiang Xijin 蒋锡金  
Jiang Zhaohe 蒋兆和  
jiehua 界画  
Jin Zhaohe 金肇野  
Kaifan 岂凡  
Kang Youwei 康有为  
Kantō 関東  
Kawabata Yasunari 川端康成

Kawakami Hajime 河上肇  
Kawakami Sumio 川上澄生  
Kikuchi Kan 菊池寛  
Komaki Ōmi 小牧近江  
Kurahara Korehito 蔵原惟人  
Kuriyagawa Hakuson 厨川白村  
Lai Shaoqi 赖少其(少麒)  
Lanjia 蓝伽  
li 隶  
Li Chuli 李初梨  
Li Hua 李桦  
Li Jinfa 李金髮  
Li Junying 李俊英  
Li Kuchan 李苦禅  
Li Puyuan 李朴园  
Li Shicen 李石岑  
Li Shutong 李叔同  
Li Xiaofeng 李小峰  
Li Yishi 李毅士  
Li Yuyi 李寓一  
li zhi mei 力之美  
Li Zongren 李宗仁  
Liang Qichao 梁启超  
Liang Xihong 梁锡鸿  
Liang Yijian 梁益坚  
Liang Yunxiang 梁云翔  
Lianhua 联华  
Lin Fengmian 林风眠  
Lin Wenzheng 林文铮  
Liqun 力群  
Liu Haisu 刘海粟  
Liu Jipiao 刘既漂  
Liu Kaiqu 刘开渠  
Liu Lun 刘仑  
Liu Na'ou 刘呐鸥  
Liu Xian 刘岷  
Liu Xingxian 刘兴宪  
Liyang 力扬  
Lou Shiyi 楼适夷  
Lu Di 陆地

Lu Shaofei 鲁少飞  
Lu Xun 鲁迅  
Lü Cheng 吕澂  
Lü Yanzhi 吕彦直  
Luo Qingzhen 罗清桢  
Ma Da 马达  
Maekawa Senpan 前川千帆  
Mai Ke Ang 麦克昂  
Mao Dun 茅盾  
Mao Zedong 毛泽东  
Masuda Wataru 增田涉  
Matsui Sumako 松井须磨子  
Mei Changye 梅长业  
Meiji 明治  
meishu 美术  
meishu zhanlanhui 美术展览会  
meiyu 美育  
Meizhuan 美专  
minjian 民间  
minzhong yishu 民众艺术  
Modeng 摩登  
Mu Shiyi 穆时英  
mudiao 木雕  
muke 木刻  
Muramatsu Shōfū 村松梢風  
Murayama Tomoyoshi 村山知義  
Ni Yide 倪貽德  
Nie Er 聂耳  
Nihonga 日本画  
Ōkuma Shigenobu 大隈重信  
Ōmura Seigai 大村西崖  
Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩  
Ōya Sōichi 大宅壮一  
Pan Jie'nong 潘子农  
Pan Ye 潘业  
Pan Yuliang 潘玉良  
Pang Xunqin 庞薰琹  
Qi Baishi 齐白石  
Qian Xingcun 钱杏邨  
Qiu Di 丘堤

quanmin 全民  
rōnin 浪人  
Rou Shi 柔石  
Ryōji Chomei 料治朝明  
Sasaki Takamaru 佐々木孝丸  
Satō Haruo 佐藤春夫  
Satomura Kinzō 里村欣三  
Sha Fei 沙飞  
Shen Congwen 沈从文  
Shen Qiyu 沈起予  
Shen Xiling 沈西苓  
Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰  
Shi Zhecun 施蛰存  
Shimamura Hōgetsu 島村抱月  
shin-hanga 新版画  
Shitao 石涛  
Situ Qiao 司徒乔  
Situ Zou 司徒奏  
Song Qingling 宋庆龄  
Songyao 颂尧  
sōsaku-hanga 创作版画  
su 俗  
Sun Duoci 孙多慈  
Sun Fuxi 孙福熙  
Sun Shiyi 孙师毅  
Sun Yat-sen 孙逸仙  
Taishō 大正  
Tang Juan 唐雱  
Tang Ke 唐珂  
Tang Tao 唐弢  
Tang Yingwei 唐英伟  
Tang Zengyang 汤增敦  
Tanizaki Junichirō 谷崎潤一郎  
Tao Jingsun 陶晶荪  
Tao Yuanqing 陶元庆  
Teiten 帝展  
Tian Han 田汉  
Tianyi 天一  
tuhua 图画  
Uchiyama Kakichi 内山嘉吉

Uchiyama Kanzō	内山完造
ukiyo-e	浮世絵
Urugawa Yasuro	宇留河泰吕
Wang Daizhi	王代之
Wang Duqing	王独清
Wang Guangyi	王广义
Wang Jingfang	王菁芳
Wang Jiyuan	汪济远
Wang Junchu	王均初
Wang Shaoluo	王绍洛
Wang Yachen	汪亚尘
Wang Yiliu	王一榴
Wang Zhanfei	汪占飞
Wang Zhaoming	王肇明
Wei Tianlin	卫天霖
weimiao weixiao	惟秒惟肖
Wen Tao	温涛
wenren hua	文人画
Wozha	沃渣
Wu Dayu	吴大羽
Wu Fading	吴法鼎
Wu Mengfei	吴梦非
Wu Renwen	吴人文
Wu Wan	吴琬
Wu Yinxian	吴印咸
Wu Zuoren	吴作人
Xia Peng	夏朋
Xia Yan	夏衍
Xiao Chuanjiu	萧传玖
Xiao Youmei	萧友梅
xiaowu	肖物
xieyi	写意
Xiong Foxi	熊佛西
Xu Beihong	徐悲鸿
Xu Guangping	许广平
Xu Lunyin	许伦音
Xu Tiankai	许天开(闾开)
Xu Xingzhi	许幸之
Xu Xunlei	徐迅雷
Xu Zexiang	徐则骧

Xu Zhimo	徐志摩
ya	雅
Yamamoto Kanae	山本鼎
Yamamoto Sanehiko	山本実彦
Yan Wenliang	严文樑
Yanase Masamu	柳瀬正夢
yang	阳
Yang Qingqing	杨清馨
Yang Taiyang	阳太阳
Yang Xingfo	杨杏佛
Yao Ke	姚可
Yashiro Yukio	矢代幸雄
Ye Lingfeng	叶灵凤
Ye Luo	叶洛
Yi Peiji	易培基
yin	阴
Ying Yunwei	应云卫
Yinghuan	瀛环
yishu	艺术
Yizhuan	艺专
Yokomitsu Riichi	横光利一
Yu	隅
Yu Dafu	郁达夫
Yu Hai	于海
Yu Jianhua	郁剑华
Yu Jifan	俞寄凡
yuan	圆
Yuan Shikai	袁世凯
zaixian	再现
Zeng Jinke	曾今可
Zhang Daofan	张道藩
Zhang E	张謇
Zhang Hui	张惠
Zhang Tiao	张眺
Zhang Wang	张望
Zhang Yi'an	张亦庵
Zhang Ying	张影
Zhang Ziping	张资平
Zhang Zuolin	张作霖
Zhao Jiabi	赵家璧

Zhao Shou	赵兽
Zhao Taimou	赵太牟
Zheng Boqi	郑伯奇
Zheng Gong	郑工
Zheng Yefu	郑野夫
Zheng Zhenduo	郑振铎
Zhong Kaizhi	钟恺之
Zhou Duo	周多
Zhou Lingsun	周玲荪
Zhou Qin hao	周勤豪
Zhou Shoujuan	周瘦鹃

Zhou Shuren	周树人
Zhou Xi	周熙
Zhou Xiang	周湘
Zhou Yang	周扬
Zhu Da	朱耷
Zhu Guangqian	朱光潜
Zhu Jingwo	朱镜我
Zhu Qizhan	朱屺瞻
Zhu Yingpeng	朱应鹏
Zong Baihua	宗白华
Zuolian	左联

## SCHOOLS, ASSOCIATIONS, INSTITUTIONS, AND EXHIBITIONS

All-China Federation of Artists	中华全国艺术家协会
Alliance of Avant-Garde Artists	前卫艺术家同盟
Alliance of the Worker and Peasant Artists	劳农艺术家同盟
Art and Literature Research Society	文艺研究会
Art Association of China	中国美术会
Art Convention	艺术大会
Art Movement Society	艺术运动社
Avant-Garde Theater	前卫座
Awakened Lion Society	醒狮社
Beijing National Art College	北京国立艺术学院
Beiping Painting Research Society	北平绘画研究会
Beiping-Tianjin Woodcut Research Society	平津木刻研究会
Beiping Woodcut Research Society	北平木刻研究会
Big Way Drama Society	大道剧社
<i>Capital Fine Arts Exhibition</i>	首都美术展览会
Cartoon Society	漫画社
Celestial Horse Society	天马会
Central Fine Arts Association	中央美术会
China College of Art	中华艺术大学
China Knowledge and Science Society	中华学艺社
China League for Civil Rights	中国民权保障同盟
Chinese Association for Educational Reforms	中华教育改进社
Chinese Communist Party	中国共产党
Chinese Educational Association	中国教育会
Chinese Society for Aesthetic Education	中华美育会
Chinese Society of Independent Artists	中华独立美术协会



Clubhouse for Ningbo Natives	宁波同乡会馆
Commission on Art Education	艺术教育委员会
Creation Society	创造社
Daxia University	大夏大学
Deep Engraving Print Making and Research Society	深刻版画创作研究会
Deux Mondes Society	苔蒙画会
Diantong Film Studio	电通影片公司
Eighteen Art Research Institute	一八艺术研究所
Eighteen Art Society	一八艺社
Epoch Fine Arts Society	时代美术社
Far Eastern Antiwar Congress	远东反战大会
Fine Arts Work-study Society	美术工学社
<i>First Jiangsu Provincial Fine Arts Exhibition</i>	第一届江苏省美术展览会
Fudan University	复旦大学
General Alliance of the Left-Wing Cultural Field in China	中国左翼文化界总同盟
Guangdong Drama Research Institute	广东戏剧研究所
<i>Guangdong Provincial Fine Arts Exhibition</i>	广东全省美术展览会
Guangdong University	广东大学
Guanghua University	光华大学
Guangzhou Municipal School of Fine Arts	广州市立美术学校
Hall of Popular Education	民众教育馆
Hangzhou National Art Academy	杭州国立艺术学院
Hanlin Imperial Academy	翰林院
<i>Imperial Art Academy Exhibition</i>	帝國美術院展覽會
Independent Art Association	独立美術協會
Iron and Wood Art Society	铁木艺社
Iron Horse Prints Society	铁马版画会
Japan Creative Print Society	日本創作版画協會
Japan Print Society	日本版画協會
Japan Proletarian School of Literature and Art Federation	日本無産派文芸聯盟
Japan Proletariat Art Federation	日本プロレタリア芸術聯盟
Japan Proletariat Literature and Art Federation	日本プロレタリア文芸聯盟
Japanese Communist Party	日本共産党
Jiangsu Provincial Educational Association	江苏省教育协会
<i>Joint Exhibition by Artists of the Nation</i>	全国艺术家联合展览会
Kawabata Painting School	川端画学校
Keio Gijuku	慶應義塾
Knife Force Woodcut Research Society	刀力木刻研究会

Kyoto Municipal School of Fine Arts and Crafts	京都市美術工芸学校
Labor University	劳动大学
League of Left-Wing Artists	左翼美术家联盟
League of Left-Wing Writers	左翼作家联盟
Learning Center for Backdrop Painting	布景传习所
Liangyou Press	良友图书公司
Lida Academy	立达学园
Lingnan School	岭南画派
Literary Research Association	文学研究会
Literature Society	文学社
M. K. Woodcut Research Society	M. K. 木刻研究会
Main Current Fine Arts School	主潮美术学校
Modern Prints Society	现代版画会
Modern Woodcut Research Society	现代木刻研究会
Morning Flowers Society	朝花社
Muse Society	摩社
Nanjing Superior Teachers' College	南京高等师范学校
National Art Academy	国立艺术学院
National Fine Arts College	国立美术学校
<i>National Fine Arts Exhibition</i>	全国美术展览会
<i>National Joint Woodcut Exhibition</i>	全国木刻联合展览会
National Music Conservatory	国立音乐学院
National Products Exposition	国货展览会
New China Art College	新华艺术专科学校
New Culture Movement	新文化运动
New Hall of General Cultivation	新普育堂
Oriental Art Research Society	东方艺术研究会
Overseas Art Movement Society	海外艺术运动社
Painting Method Research Society of Peking University	北京大学画法研究会
Patriotic Girls School	爱国女子学校
Peking University	北京大学
Phoebus Society	霍普斯学会
Rapid Torrent Woodcut Research Society	激流木刻研究会
Relief Society of China	中国济难会
<i>Second National Traveling Woodcut Exhibition</i>	第二回全国木刻流动展览会
Shanghai Academy of Pictorial Arts	上海图画美术院
Shanghai Art College	上海艺术大学
Shanghai Art Teachers' College	上海艺术师范大学

Shanghai Association of Woodcut Makers	上海木刻工作者协会
Shanghai Fine Arts College	上海美术专门学校
Shenzhou Scholarly Society	神州学社
Sino-Soviet Cultural Association	中苏文化协会
Society of Art Theaters	艺术剧社
South Sea Business Promotion Exposition	南洋劝业博览会
Southern Art Institute	南国艺术学院
Southern Film and Drama Society	南国电影戏剧社
Southern Society	南国社
Spring Field Painting Society	春地画会
Storm Society	决澜社
Sun Society	太阳社
Sun Yat-sen University	中山大学
Suzhou Fine Arts School	苏州美术专科学校
Teachers' College for Women	女子师范大学
Tokyo School of Fine Arts	东京美術学校
Tokyo Superior Normal College	东京高等師範学校
Tokyo Women's Academy of Fine Arts	东京女子美術専門学校
Tongchi University	同济大学
Tsukiji Theater	築地劇場
Tushanwan Painting House	土山湾画馆
Undertaking Society	开展社
University Council	大学院
Unnamed Woodcut Society	未名木刻社
Waseda University	早稻田大学
White and Black Society	白と黒社
White Goose Painting Society	白鵞画会
Wild Grass Society	野草社
Wild Spike Society	野穗社
Wild Wind Painting Society	野风画会
Wooden Bell Woodcut Research Society	木铃木刻研究会
World Art Research Society	世界艺术研究会
Yiwen Middle School	艺文中学
Young China Association	少年中国学会
Youth Art Society	青年艺术社
Zhejiang Two-tier Teachers' College	浙江两级师范学堂

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## Abbreviations for frequently cited titles:

BHJC	<i>Banhua jicheng: Lu Xun cang Zhongguo xiandai muke quanji</i> (Progress in prints: Complete modern Chinese woodcuts collected by Lu Xun). Shanghai: Lu Xun jinian guan; Nanjing: Jiangsu guji, 1991. 5 vols.
CYPQJ	<i>Cai Yuanpei quanji</i> (Complete works of Cai Yuanpei). Edited by Gao Pingshu. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984. 7 vols.
LH SNP	Yuan Zhihuang and Chen Zuen. <i>Liu Haisu nianpu</i> (Chronological biography of Liu Haisu). Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1992.
LXNP	Beijing Lu Xun Museum. <i>Lu Xun nianpu</i> (Chronological biography of Lu Xun). Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 2000. 4 vols.
LXQJ	<i>Lu Xun quanji</i> (Complete works of Lu Xun). Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1981. 16 vols.

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